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FEATURE STORY

The RIVER PIRATES

by

HAMILTON CRAIGIE

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THE EDITOR.

The RIVER PIRATES

by

Hamilton Craigie

CHAPTER ONE

O'HALLORAN, the square-jawed chief of the Harbor Police of New York, lifted a face curiously lined with streaks and ridges as there came a knocking at the office door.

He laid down the paper he had been reading, his jaw muscles tensing with the pressure, lifting his head to face the deskman who, with an odd, almost a warning, look, stood aside as a big man came striding into the small room; he was followed in turn by others.

The big man, Carruthers, president of the Midvale Shipping Company, turned a red face to the official at the desk.

"O'Halloran," he began, without preamble, his thick tones vibrating in the narrow room, "we"—he waved a thick hand at the others at his back—"we've come to see if it is possible for you to do something! It's getting beyond endurance, I tell you! The river thieves are robbing us right and left, and nothing has been done to stop them."

He paused, gesturing toward the others as if for confirmation: Bristow, treasurer of the Transatlantic Shippers; Thurston, the venerable head of the old line Mercantile; Hugh Sampson, president of the Revonah Transportation Company, a tall bleak man with a hard eye and a furtive, appraising manner.

These nodded. Plainly they had chosen Carruthers as their spokesman. The president of the Midvale Shipping Company went on:

"It's beyond endurance, O'Halloran! We're desperate, I tell you! Night after night, under our very noses, we're being ruined—robbed—looted! The river pirates take what they want. We've got watchmen on every pier; we've doubled 'em—doubled their pay—hired men with only the very best of records; but the plundering goes on: first a case here, a bale there—then a carload—a train-load, a ship-load, you might say! Now——"

His voice went on and on, filling the room with its complaints until, like a bleak wind, in confirmation there came a voice like the croak of a raven, the voice of Hugh Sampson of the Revonah:

"And do you realize, Mr. O'Halloran—but of course you must know—that in the past year alone these thieves have gotten away with the astounding total, in goods stolen, of five mil-lion dol-lars? Five million, sir! Why—a—a—Rockefeller, a Ford, a Carnegie would never be able to stand up under that! Never, sir! And we——"

He ceased, as the Chief of the Harbor Police raised a protesting hand.

"Yes, Mr. Sampson, and you gentlemen, it's true; I'm not denying it; but"—his tone

was curiously mild as he spread his hands wide in a quick, protesting gesture—"I've done everything possible, gentlemen—everything. I've had my men on the piers, the docks; but—well——"

He stopped abruptly as Carruthers opened his mouth to speak again, lifting a restraining hand. Taking the receiver of his desk-phone from the hook, for a brisk interval he spoke hurriedly and low; then:

"It is true, gentlemen," he told them, "that there has been one thing, or one man, rather, that I've overlooked! I might say one bet—my one best bet, *our* one best bet, gentlemen! But of that, or of him, more later, when we'll be talking in results!"

He rose, bowing his callers out, to the accompaniment of a parting volley of advice, recrimination, prophecy, appeal. But through it all a smile had been hovering about his mouth. The door again opened, disclosing the figure of a tall, well-set-up man in plain clothes, and the smile broadened to a grin.

"Harrison," greeted the Chief, "you're the very man I've been waiting for, and the waiting has been a bit longer than I liked, I can tell you! I'm sorry, and I'm glad—sorry to have to cut short your vacation, but glad, because——"

For a long five minutes he spoke rapidly and low; then:

"You're pretty certain, Harrison?" he asked, for the first time a shake of abrupt unease replacing the quick optimism of his tone. "You know what it means: these birds 'd bump off their own brother if there was money enough in it—you know—now, you be careful!"

Detective-Sergeant Harrison spoke slowly in answer, almost in a whisper, his strong hand, with its oddly tapering fingers, flat upon the table-tap:

"Chief, I'll do my best," he said simply. "But first off, I should say it'll be no easy matter to get *in* on the job; tonight there'll be a new guard on duty at Pier 37—that's the Revonah pier, you know. Well—and his name'll be—Harrison."

For a moment he stopped as if he had been shot. Whirling to the door, he flung it wide. A moment later he stood in the opening, straining his gaze into the shadows of the hall. He dimly saw a man's shadowy figure disappearing. Then, with a twisted grimace, saluting, he had turned, going outward into the night.

CHAPTER TWO

MIDNIGHT and a dense darkness, without stars or moon; ink-black, yet filled with stealthy rustlings. There was a slap and gurgle of water against piling, the distant faint put-put of a motor-boat rising and dying against the low-hung curtain of the dark sky.

On Pier 37 there was dense, smothering gloom, save where, at the pier-head, the hiss and sputter of an arc-light made a pale circle of radiance.

Into this circle of light came Harrison, stepping lightly, like a great cat, a long club dangling from one hairy, freckled fist. He had taken a job there as a night watchman. A moment he stood peering outward across the string-piece, narrowing his gaze upon the sullen water just below, fingers tightening upon his heavy locust, and then reaching for his gun in its hip holster, as there came a sudden movement at his back.

Pivoting on the balls of his feet with, for a big man, an extremely quick motion, he flung up an arm, and the bright beam of his pocket-flash cut into the murk. A moment it danced, glimmering, upon box and bale, stabbing a white finger of light into the darkness—but there was no one there.

The detective—he was but one of a number of hired guards on the pier—stood hesitant for a second, his glance in a speculative, slow stare upon the mountain of merchandise piled about him to right and left.

It was his first night on the pier as a sworn defender of the property of the Revonah Transportation Company under the name Masterman. He remembered now the look in the eyes of Big Mike Corleone, the head watchman, who had hired him—the words, meaningless, as it might chance, and yet charged with meaning:

"You—Masterman—if you're a *right guy*—if I find you *right*—we'll pull to-

gether fine! Now—you watch your step!"

Later there had been the curious behavior of Petersen, another guard. Masterman had come upon the "Swede," as the man Petersen was called, as, from behind the angle of a towering pile of bales, he had seen a quick glimmer, thrice repeated. And then, although he could not have sworn to it, there came an answering flash, low down, like the flare of a masked battery, from the Jersey shore.

Petersen had met him with a stolid look.

"Ay ban fix my light," was all he had said, and Detective Masterman made no comment. But as he had turned away there had been a puzzled look in his eyes, a grim set to his straight mouth.

For to right and left, as he well knew, there was a fortune in silk; the contents of one bale alone would run to money; and on this pier, as on others, the toll of the river pirates had mounted until it touched the staggering total of five million dollars. Well—he was there to guard it, or a part of it.

But the face of Petersen persisted in his memory with its wide, flat cheek-bones and grim, trap-like mouth. Somewhere he had seen that face before, but at that time its owner had been without a cap, bareheaded; Masterman was certain of it.

Now, as he stood staring at the dim loom of the bales and cases, the sound that he had heard, or thought that he had heard, had come again; it was like a mumble, a mutter, a murmur of voices as of men talking together in a cellar. It reached him even as from upstream there sounded, abruptly, the racing drone of a motor driven at high speed.

He heard the quick echo of a low-voiced hail; it sounded out of the darkness from landward, and with it the quick pad-pad of running feet. Gun out, he rushed down between the bales and boxes at a crouching run, until, all at once, down a clear lane to his left, he saw, beneath the soaring counter of a freighter the sharp prow of a motor-cruiser. It had appeared abruptly like a sliding ghost.

Then, while he watched, as if at a signal, her deck became filled with men. They swarmed forward as Masterman swung up his gun to aim at them.

His finger was tightening on the trigger when there came a quick, panting onrush at his right. A dim shape appeared to rise and then dive forward, spread-eagled like a bat toward the detective. There followered a grunting oath as attacker and attacked crashed downward to the dock.

Masterman heard the thud and clatter as of stolen bales and boxes falling upon the pirate's deck as, in the darkness, he sought for a handhold upon his elusive antagonist. But even as the detective fought he was conscious that there had been no sounds to indicate resistance. The thing had been accomplished in silence save for a low-voiced hail, if it had been a hail, and the noise of the cases shunted upon the cruiser's deck—then the precipitate flight of the pirate. Evidently the crooks had been warned off.

The detective's adversary grunted, swore, and at the sound Masterman's stiff fingers, groping, had come away from the man's throat.

"Petersen!" he gasped, and at the answering voice he leaped upright.

"Hell!" exclaimed Petersen disgustedly. "Masterman. What do you know about that? The river pirates ban get away—clean. I thought—well, that makes no neffer mind."

But as the detective got slowly to his feet, following the Swede outward to the sentry-box, he was thinking, although he did not express his thought in words, that Petersen had known who he was all along. Either the man was unbelievably stupid, a pretty fair actor, or—just a plain crook. And as between the three, Masterman might have taken his pick and gambled with the certainty, at any rate, that there was something rotten in the State of Denmark—or Sweden.

But as he followed the man outward to the pier entrance Masterman said nothing. He would keep his own council, for tonight at any rate. Tomorrow—that would be another day.

CHAPTER THREE

THE detective, going home to his lodging in a West Thirtieth Street walk-up, strode steadily onward with unseeing eyes. He was up against it; that was the truth of the matter. He suspected that the guards were in cahoots with the river pirates—but could he prove it? In spite of what he had seen and heard there was nothing incriminating that he could lay a finger on. The evidence, if any, would, as none knew better than he, have to be of the cast-iron, copper-riveted variety to furnish a conviction. And these pirates were powerful. Powerful enough, at any rate, to hush up the murder of a half-dozen watchmen; the indictments had been pending this long while, as the officer well knew.

Nearing Twenty-ninth street, Masterman abruptly slowed. Ahead of him, outlined for a moment in the radiance from the corner arc, he had seen the figure of a man, the face in profile, half-turned to his. It was Petersen.

But it was not at sight of the Swede that the watcher, from the shelter of a dark hallway, sucked in his breath with a quick, hissing sibilance. For there was a man in converse with Petersen. His face, under the light, showed wolfish and grim. Even at that distance the so-called Masterman had recognized that face—the face of a man whom he knew, and who knew him.

"Knuckles Ellison" they had called the man in the days when the Navy had been something more than a peace-time ceremonial of maneuvers and counter-maneuvers. Masterman knew his story, and it was a sordid one. For Ellison was "bad"; he was wanted for a brace of killings; he had been drummed out of the Service, but that had been only a beginning. Now he was a professional crook.

Masterman could hear those huge knuckles crack even from half a block of distance.

"Scheming." That must be it, the detective reasoned, as, from the shelter of his covert, he watched the two, still talking, as they vanished around the corner.

And with their disappearance Masterman stood not upon the order of his going. It was yet early, but there was a drug-store open on the corner. Going in, he found the place deserted, the sleepy night man dozing doubtless in some cubicle at the rear. Entering the telephone booth, he called a number, with a precise and authoritative accent, and talked into the transmitter hurriedly.

"I've got the goods on them—yes," he snapped; one eye on the doorway. "They don't suspect me—*yet*. But we'll have to make it a rush order, Chief. Yes, you said it." He laughed. "Yes, they're looking me over, and I think they'll probably be making me an offer soon. Well, I'll keep you wise."

Leaving the drug-store, Masterman, reaching his small room on the top floor of the West Thirtieth Street tenement and put in eight solid hours of dreamless sleep. Then his supper, or his breakfast, taken in a longshoreman's restaurant, he turned his steps in the direction of the dock.

On the east side of West Street, which is the only side of it for most of its length not given over to piers and docks, there is the saloon of Dutchman Charlie Westervelt.

It is a dark place, even by day, and in it there are secrets within secrets, walls within walls. Behind its stained and battered swing-doors the long bar runs inward a good twenty feet, and beyond this there is a door masked by a mirror. There is a stairway to the right of this that you would never even suspect, unless you were unlucky enough to stand upon the trap-door just above. In that case you would discover a number of things—and then presently you might forget that there had ever been such a place as Dutchman Charlie Westervelt's.

The disguised detective, passing the saloon, wheeled abruptly to the right-about. He knew the place—none better—and if, as it might chance, he stepped in for a glass of near-beer, he might, he figured, learn something to his advantage.

But there was one chance that he must take: the absence or the presence of the man with the dark face and the twisted

sneer, Knuckles Ellison. Well—he must take that chance.

Pushing open the swing-doors, at first he could see nothing save the white jacket of the man behind the bar, the darkling glimmer of the long mirror, festooned and frosted with curling arabesques. And then, abruptly, he saw a man advancing to meet him out of the shadows of the rear—a man with great, bowed shoulders and long arms like clubs. He bent his head, peering forward into the shadows—and the figure did likewise, in a grim mockery, as it might seem, of the man who entered.

Masterman chuckled then, moving toward the bar, as the explanation was apparent.

It had been his own reflection in that far mirror, behind which was the door.

"A beer," he stated, glancing out of the tail of his eye to where, farther along, two longshoremen, judging by their dress, were wrangling quietly with a sort of monotonous persistence. And for a moment, through the slow buzz of talk, he fancied that there had come from the shadows at the rear a ripple, a movement, like the flicker of a wind-blown leaf.

The bartender, a man with a close-cropped, bullet head and a mouth that was like a straight gash above a double chin barbered to the blood, leaned forward, speaking out of the corner of his mouth. He spread his thick fingers wide upon the stained and battered wood, gesturing rearward with a flirt of his thick thumb.

"Are you Mister Masterman?" he questioned respectfully enough, his eye in a quick, flashing appraisal upon his customer's heavy shoulders and thick neck.

The pier guard nodded.

"Well, Mister Corleone—he's in back; he'd like a word with you, Mr. Masterman," continued the bartender.

The detective looked at the man for a moment, eye to eye, but the fellow did not blink. Somehow, he was convinced, the bartender had been tipped off, and for a moment, deep down, caution whispered: "Do not go."

But the dock guard was not of the common run of men. Danger and he had been bedfellows, and it would not by any means be the first time that he had "taken a chance."

"Good enough," he made answer lightly. "Well, lead on, Macduff—Barkis is willin'."

With which mixture of quotations he followed the bartender backward to that mirror that was in effect a door. It opened noiselessly, and there, in the full glare of a dazzling electrolier, he saw the men he suspected.

One was Petersen, his wide mouth agrin; another, a man whom he recognized as the timekeeper for the Revonah; two or three others whom he did not know, hard-bitten, cold of eye, their thick fingers holding glasses that were like thimbles. And last, Big Mike Corleone himself. He was a big heavy fellow, the rigid batrachian mouth lifting at the corners from stained and blackened teeth. Knuckles Ellison was nowhere about.

Corleone, the padrone, for that is what he was, stared straight at Masterman for a moment without speech. Then, stabbing a blunt forefinger at the newcomer, he spoke, and his tone was like chilled steel:

"You, Mist' Man, you like-a your job, hey? Now"—the thick tones gathered a hissing intensity of menace, a sudden violence—"we want to know—*how you stand?*"

CHAPTER FOUR

FOR a moment there was a little silence, in which Masterman could hear the ticking of his watch, like the beating of a heart. These men, as he was well enough aware, whether or not they were in cahoots with the river pirates, would stick at little in the accomplishment of their desires. He was aware of the sardonic face of Petersen, the sneering grin. A tension had grown, and with it, as he stood there with his back against the door, the realization that it must be now or never, that he must prove that he was as tough as they were.

"Why, yes, I like ther job, Boss," he made answer slowly, as if with a certain groping bewilderment. "Sure I like it,

but—but I don't get you, Boss—on the up an' up, I don't."

He paused as the padrone, his eyes agate-hard, bored into his.

For a moment the Italian seemed to be debating with himself; then, in a hoarse, challenging whisper, huge hand palm upward upon the table:

"You want money, hey?" he rasped. "You can use her, young fellow—no?"

Masterman's eyes narrowed, his strong hand balling into a fist. He was still conscious of the tension, like a fine wire drawn to pitch—the waiting, as of wolves who watch, eyes alight in red-rimmed anticipation, for the kill.

His face, which had seemed stolid, dull, broke in an eager mask of reckless greed.

"Of course I want money. You show *me*, Boss," he said with a grin.

Big Mike grunted, turning upon Petersen with a savage snarl when the Swede's fingers, reaching, had plucked his sleeve. For a minute he spoke rapidly, in a sort of fierce, sing-song mutter, his eyes, bright as death, upon the detective, where he stood, weighing, appraising even as he talked.

The thing was clear; he was offering Masterman a share in the loot—probably a big share. Masterman had impressed him—that was evident; he could use him, it appeared. Now it must be yes or no.

"You take my offer—or you leave her, young fellow," growled the padrone, "but if you don't—if you breathe by so much as one little whisper the words of me, Big Mike Corleone, then—you will be crushed—like this."

The great hand, palm upward, closed into a fist; the eyes, chill with a something Masterman could not at all define, bored into his with a steady, bright, menacing stare.

The detective raised his head.

"All right, Boss," he said. "I'll be there with bells. Now you lead me to it."

The big man sat backward in his chair, pressing a buzzer on the table; at a crook of his finger the bartender, with a quick subservience, returned with a tray on which were a bottle and glasses.

For the moment Masterman was safe, but for how long? Somehow that look in the eye of Petersen, the Swede—was it possible that the man knew more than he, Masterman, suspected? For instance, that his name was not Masterman at all, but a different appellation altogether?

And Knuckles Ellison—was it possible that he and Petersen had been discussing the supposed dock guard at the corner of the street?

Among these men, and yet not of them, he was conscious now of a certain aloofness, a constraint, as if, weighing him in the balance, they yet waited for a sign of his allegiance. He heard Petersen's voice in a burring mumble, saw the lean, hawk-like, savage face through the drifting, flat layers of the tobacco smoke, as the Swede's words came in a hissing guttural:

"An ace in ther *hole*, as sure as Gawd made little apples, Mike. Ellison—he's our one best bet, I'm tellin' you; but as for this jasper here—well, I dunno."

The voice fell, the words an indistinguishable mutter; then, with a sudden jerk, the padrone turned full-face to Masterman. His hard eyes like pieces of volcanic glass in a face of flint, he regarded the officer for a long ten seconds in pregnant silence. Then:

"Ecco," he said. "It is but right that we should prove your loyalty, my friend—that you must prove yourself."

His voice lowered to a harsh whisper, and as the full import of the words smote him, Masterman realized that he was not merely in a trap, but that the trap, yawning, had been sprung under his feet. He moistened his stiff lips as the padrone spoke:

"There is a little job on Pier 39. There is a man there—he is in our way. We do not know him, but there is a rich consignment; my friend, of—well, no matter—it has but just now come in. This man, he is a special guard, and so tonight I will give you this evening off. It will be your job to see that this man will trouble us no longer. That is the test."

For a moment, hardened as he was, to Masterman the close room appeared to dance and sway under the lights, the ring of faces melted, reformed, dissolved. He heard his own voice, but he did not recog-

nize it as his own, so strained were the tones.

"I'm with you, Corleone. Well, when do I start?"

CHAPTER FIVE

HAVING set his hand to the plough, the detective could not turn back. That special guardian at Pier 39, as it happened, was a friend of his. He was, in fact, a brother officer. To dispose of him in cold blood as the price of his admission to this gang of river thieves sickened the detective, even as he knew that he would have to go through with it whether he would or no.

The plunder that was to be theirs for the taking would be a rich haul, and behind him, as he well knew, would be Petersen and the rest, ready, quick fingers upon triggers, at the first sign of the double-cross, to shoot him.

And, after all, what guarantee had he that he was not to serve merely as their cat's-paw, the deed accomplished to be, in his turn, a second victim, the slayer and the slain? He was in a tight place, and none knew it better than he, for might it not well be that Ellison had recognized and betrayed him? They knew, probably, who he was—and they had taken this devious method to be rid of him. Such tricks had been done before.

So it might be, he was reflecting, as, approaching the dark shadow of Pier 39, he paused a moment, staring outward at the silent river, listening, holding his breath.

After all, the river pirates, whether one gang or many, had prospered by a sort of uncanny foresight, sheer luck, or collusion, which had set the Department by the ears. A dozen times, hard upon their heels on the piers of the Hudson, the pursuing officers had nearly run them to their lair. But each time they had been baffled. Their quarry had disappeared as if the earth and the waters of the river had opened and swallowed them. And twice the harbor police had captured their motor-boats, only to find them empty, or nearly so.

The way they vanished was an impassé and a mystery, but a mystery which might somehow jibe with that obscure and cryptic reference to "an ace in the hole"—meaningless and yet, as it might chance, charged with meaning. As yet the detective had not the key to the secret of their mysterious disappearance on the river. He went down to the waterfront.

In the shadow of the pier entrance he halted, his fingers tightening upon his gun-butt, his eyes straining against the velvet black.

A half-hour ago he had managed to send a message to the man he was ordered to kill. His heart hammering beneath his ribs, he advanced now with the stealth and caution of an Indian to where, in the black shadow cast by the long pier, the slap and gurgle of the water echoed like voices whispering together.

Behind him half a block, as he well knew, there lurked his invisible bodyguard of death. In a short time now he must account for that lone guardian—the man who had been his friend.

The night held black as Erebus as Masterman, those unseen watchers at his back, felt for the ladder running downward from a trap-door. He went down it presently, pausing when half-way to lean inward, then crawling through a narrow opening which led beneath the pier.

As the padrone had told him, presently he found an opening, another small trap, up through which, gun held out before him rigid as a rock, he gained the enclosed and locked covered pier. Listening a half-minute, he heard, faint and thin, sounds that told him of the ingress of those who followed; then, walking forward, he finally halted with a quick intake of his breath.

A man was coming toward him along the pier, the wavering light of his lantern dancing on ahead to his slow, swinging stride. It was the "Special," the man he was to attack. Masterman, flattening himself against a huge bale in his path, swung upward his heavy gun.

His friend Gunson, humming a little tune, came on and passed him.

Behind him the detective could feel rather than see the crooks, guns out, waiting.

It must be now or never. With a deep-drawn, hissing suspiration of his breath, he swung upward the heavy gun, muttering a few words of warning to his friend. Then he fired.

CHAPTER SIX

THE officer's gun swept downward. There came a deep sigh, a choked gurgle, the sodden impact of a heavy fall, then silence.

Without a backward glance at the still figure, face downward in the dust, the detective reached the street, alone, under the pale stars. Ahead of him, rising and dying in the distance, there sounded for a moment the staccato explosions of a motor—the bodyguard of river pirates returning, doubtless, to report. Well enough Masterman knew that, hidden in the shadows, they had witnessed that ambush, watched him coming out of the pier and to the street. They would leave nothing to chance. As to the disposal of the body, that was nothing to them; it would be found in due course. And presently, even as the dock guard detective watched, himself hidden in the shadows, there came the purring of a motor-boat. On the pier the clang and muffled fall of iron upon iron was heard. The looters were at work.

It was then that, pausing under the arc-light at the corner of the street, Masterman, his hand in a mechanical gesture upon the lapel of his coat, exclaimed aloud. Something which he always carried—a talisman, if you will, which he was never without, was gone, vanished—where he could not say. It was his shield. The officer was scarcely superstitious, but for the moment he was conscious of a sudden, creeping chill, and it was not cold.

"Ugh—some one's walking over my grave," he muttered with a forced lightness, directing his steps along the tarry street which now, black and silent under a waning moon, appeared to brood in a strange and sinister silence.

Just ahead, where a pin-point of light like an inflamed and angry eye shone out of the darkness, Masterman halted, half-turned to where, in the near distance, there showed the looming figure of a patrolman, the pale moon winking on the brass buttons. Then, as the officer moved forward, he wheeled, seeking that pin-point of light—the saloon of Dutchman Charlie.

Dodging around the corner of the street, Masterman gave a peculiar, rubbing rap; the door fell open without sound; he was in the dark and narrow hall leading from the side street inward to that back room and the men who waited.

For an instance, with the closing of the door Masterman was aware of a sudden, stealthy rustle as of many feet; then, while the darkness held, he heard the long-drawn, hissing whisper:

"S-s-s—ai."

A blaze of radiance took him between the eyes, and, blinking, he beheld, as if uprisen from the floor, a battery of eyes. They ringed him round: Corleone, Petersen, a half-dozen of that murderous fellowship, lips grinning from their canine teeth in a soundless snarl. And then, head-high, a bloodless face, the eyes glaring into his with a fixed, unwavering, unwholesome brightness, like a painted flame, appeared the face of Knuckles Ellison.

"Ha!" exclaimed Ellison, in a single syllable. Then, as a conjurer produces between finger and thumb a bauble palmed, unseen, with the speed of light, he thrust in the detective's face the talisman that he had lost—the thing that was to condemn him in the moment of his greatest need. Ellison's voice came clear, with a vicious, snarling cadence:

"*This,* Mister Dock Guard Masterman—now maybe you'll tell us how you happen to be wearing *this* little souvenir!"

The thick voice rose a note, with a savage intensity:

"You're clever, ain't you, *Mister* Masterman, but it won't help you any, because—you're going to get yours! Good and plenty! *Now!*"

Masterman stared in a hypnosis of fascination. For there, in the thick fingers of the man who faced him, was the shield that he had lost.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DETECTIVE-SERGEANT HARRISON, of the Harbor Police, was in a tight place. It was of little avail now—the ruse by which, under cover of the darkness, he had staged that fake killing of his friend and associate, Gunson of the Central Office, "special" at Pier 39. The river pirates had found him out; now they would be in at the death. For they were desperate men; not one of them but had killed his man; ruthless to slay, they would blot him out at the lifting of a finger.

With his back to the wall, the detective saw the dark face of Big Mike Corleone change, if by the merest flicker; then, so close that the wind of its passing kissed his cheek, a heavy knife sang past his shoulder; the blaze of a dozen pistols followed it.

But the detective, his eye upon that electrolier, had acted in the tenth of a second before that blast of death. Stooping, he dove, as a swimmer dives, beneath the line of fire; then, prone, he fired from the hip, and a midnight blackness followed with the smashing of the light.

But they were all about him; he was but one against many. If he could reach the door, he told himself, he would win freedom. But in the darkness the familiar outlines of one's very bedchamber become distorted, strange. Twice as, circling the long room, he thought that he had found it, still it evaded him; and in a moment now, with the coming of the bartender, there would be light.

His enemies, hampered by very weight of numbers, were yet crowding close; twice they had reached him with random blows; his cheek was wet and sticky where a chance knife-thrust had found him along the wall. And then, of a sudden, by some miracle of chance, he had come upon the door.

He heard the hoarse voice of Ellison as his stiff fingers had closed upon the knob:

"Wait a minute, you guys; we'll have some light in a minute; then——"

At the same moment that he had found the door the voice of Ellison had sounded almost at his shoulder, and with his hand upon the knob he turned, set himself, and, with the full power of his arm, struck, a lifting uppercut, full on the point of a chin.

He heard Ellison grunt; then, wrenching wide the door, he was away. Behind him sounded a savage chorus, rising to a growl of hate as, rounding the corner at full speed, he gained the sidewalk and the open street.

That they would scarcely follow him he knew. But time pressed. At last he had the "goods" on them, but he could no longer masquerade as anything but what he was. He must work fast.

There was a man even higher up in the councils of the river pirates than Big Mike. The detective knew that he would find him on Pier 39 if, as it happened, he would be able to get there first. And that there would be a trick pulled there, and within the hour, he also knew, if—and the possibility was more than likely—the padrone failed to reach this man in time.

Big Mike would not use the telephone—he would send a messenger, the detective was convinced. And so, as he had planned it, not half a minute following his getaway from the Dutchman's, a taxi slid inward to the curb; it was filled with harbor police, and the detective boarded it. Then, at his crisp command, it roared northward to a jetty half hidden between two towering docks. The policemen, the detective at their head, piled outward.

Just below a long, low motor-boat lay hidden—a racing craft, piratical in its dull black overhang and knife-like prow; thirty miles in the hour would be asking an easy performance of it. The detective at the wheel, they swung out into the river in a long, quartering circle; then, as a hawk swoops, centering on the quarry, nosed inward to Pier 39.

Above, where the dim loom of the pier showed black against the stars, there came on a sudden a low, cautious hail:

"Knuckles, is that you? Come on up; the stuff's all ready—we got it ready; now shake a leg!"

Detective Harrison gave a soundless chuckle. This time his ruse had won, and it had been as simple as subtle. The padrone had been too late. Whoever it was—the man higher up or another—had taken them for the expected river thieves—it was dead open-and-shut.

He answered cautiously, imitating the voice of Ellison as well as he was able, and then, between two ticks of the watch, he swore, deep in his throat.

With his hand upon the boarding-ladder he heard, all at once, the startled oath, the swift pad-pad of running feet; then, from across the pier the muffled explosion of a motor, rising to gunfire under the stars.

Their quarry had taken alarm and was away.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHIRLING the wheel hard over, the detective turned the boat's nose outward to the river, giving her the "gun." Like an arrow from a bow she shot out beyond the pier-head, turned in a long, feathering arc to snore southward with the full power of her great engines—southward in pursuit of a long, gray streak, visible only as a sliding ghost, and, like a ghost, fading from sight as they looked.

But the pursuing boat was powerful, with the harnessed strength of eighty horses, roaring now as its screw drove it forward in pursuit.

Five minutes—ten—and that sliding ghost ahead was once more visible, scudding beneath the stars, but slowly and surely "coming back."

"We've got 'em!" the detective exulted. "Now—watch our smoke!"

Giving the wheel to a policeman at his elbow, he bent to inspect a small calibre gun mounted in the cock-pit, cradled carefully between two padded struts. A moment he touched it, then straightened to bring his night-glass to bear upon the pirate, which by this time, with the Battery abeam, was shearing through the swell of a passing liner.

But the police boat was steadily gaining. Harrison had kept it under cover for this very purpose. It had been designed and built by a master whose craft, the fastest in the wide world, had so far swept the bays. But now they could make out the figure of the helmsman, and even as they watched there came from a little to his right a spurt of fire—the high whine of a slug followed it as it went wide.

There was the gun in the bow; Harrison, however, as yet had held his fire. In perhaps fifteen minutes, at the most, they would draw level; then he would have them—pirates and their plunder, loot and men. They had left the Battery well astern, their rush by now splitting the wake of the fugitive as, crowded to the limit, he drove southward along the Brooklyn waterfront. And then, in the batting of an eye, a scant cable's-length in the lead, the gray racer had swerved, turned at a perilous angle, to vanish behind a long, jutting pier.

Between this pier and its neighbor the entrance was narrow; workmen had made it narrower. As the police boat swung on her heel before them stretched a great raft of piles, leaving a clear lane of perhaps fifteen feet.

Through this narrow opening they drove, the searchlight blazing like a sword—a scrape, and they were clear. And there, riding idly on the slow heave and thrust of the oily water, lay their quarry.

Surging alongside, the policemen, the detective in the van, swarmed upward upon the deck, guns out. But there was no one there.

True, this time the loot remained—the margin had been too close—but the fugitives had vanished. Big Mike, Petersen, Knuckles Ellison—they had all been there, together with a certain dark-faced man, at sight of whom the police of two continents would have exulted. In the searchlight's ray, before that quick turn to harbor, Harrison had seen and known, for these were the leaders of the river pirates; they were the brains. To round them up would have meant fame, promotion, the ending of a scourge. Now—they were gone, and of them there was not a trace.

CHAPTER NINE

DETECTIVE HARRISON had known Knuckles Ellison, as has been said, at a time when the Navy had been something more than a peace-time junket of maneuvers and counter-maneuvers. In the North Sea, for instance, the two men—which was before Ellison had come down to the level of a thug—had been together as bunk-mates in the rather hazardous 'tween-decks of a mine layer. And they had had other occupations.

For instance, the thing that Ellison understood better than anybody else had been known also to Detective Harrison, and that was why, of a sudden, peering below him at the oily water swirling past the bow, he shouted once—again.

At his crisp word the crew, bestowing themselves in the narrow cock-pit, watched as the detective relinquished the wheel to Harbaugh, a gun-pointer in the old days on the SC2.

Then, as the cruiser roared outward between the piers, Harrison spoke:

"They're here—they can't have gotten very far. Now—when I give the word, Harbaugh, you throw her in reverse. Now—stand by!"

With engines throttled down, the police boat was picking a careful way through the gloom, the white beam of the searchlight like a pointing finger probing into the dark, when, at a quick word from Harrison, they backed water, steadied.

"I see," called the detective in a strange carrying whisper. "They vanished just about here. Now fire at the bulkhead of the pier."

They were facing a barrier of planks clearly shown by the powerful searchlight.

The gun in the bow of the police boat now roared repeatedly and several shots struck the planking of the bulkhead with a grinding crash of splintered wood.

A long minute they waited in strained expectancy—Harrison, his face spectral in the starshine, gazing toward the piers, until, not a cable's-length away, they saw a long gray shape shoot suddenly to view from the opening torn in the bulkhead by the gun-shots. Then:

"It's another power-boat!" exclaimed Harbaugh. "It was hidden under that pier." The others echoed him as Harrison, pointing the police boat's nose straight ahead, gave her full speed.

But the speed boat seemed waiting, heaving to the long swells. And then, as the police boat approached them, Harrison saw that the river pirates were beaten.

"They evidently realize that they can't escape us," he reflected, "else they would not submit so tamely." In fact, it afterward developed that they saw they were in a trap when those pitiless shots tore through the planking and injured several who had been standing in line with the shells. There was one way to get under the bulkhead, but no other way to get out.

"Their mysterious disappearances are easily understood now," said Harrison grimly. "They've evidently got a number of these secret hiding-places under piers in various localities, and when hard pressed dodge into them and lay low until their pursuers have gone away. That's how they baffled us so successfully on many occasions when we were chasing them after they had robbed some ship or pier. Their hiding-places were pretty well concealed, too, or they would have been nabbed long before this."

Harbaugh, training the bow-gun upon the pirates, shouted across the water, but there was no fight left in the men who, at the coming of the police-boat, crowded aft along the deck, to stand sullenly while manacles were snapped upon their wrists.

The police-boat, with the two powerboats in tow now turned, heading for the Headquarters dock.

Herding their prisoners before them, the officers, Detective Harrison in the lead, paused a moment before the door of Chief O'Halloran's private office.

Then, as the door swung wide, policemen and their prisoners fell backward in amazement. A river pirate in the grasp of Harbaugh exclaimed in a harsh whisper, his face paling to a mottled, unhealthy gray:

"My God! It's a ghost!"

It was Gunson of the Central Office—

Gunson, slain as they had thought, by Harrison, back there on that pier, but they did not know that Harrison had used a blank cartridge when he fired at his friend.

Scowling, handcuffs upon wrists, they next saw, first, Petersen, his hard face sullen, beaten; Ellison, lip lifting from his broken teeth; Big Mike Corleone, like a bear brought finally to bay. Then they heard Gunson's voice speaking to Harrison:

"Our plan worked, Ed, as sure as Gawd made little apples! I was waiting—on the other side—when you first scared 'em plumb off that pier—that time Petersen struggled with you. They knew you'd chase them, so they took a high dive and headed for under the pier. But we were waiting for 'em—the whole kit and caboodle, just as you planned it—and we just naturally put the darbies on 'em. And so—just look who's here!"

He moved aside and there, his bleak face like that of a devil, eyes like those of a trapped animal, lip lifting from his sharp white, even teeth—stood—Hugh Sampson.

The president of the Revonah Transportation Company—in reality the head of a sinister combine of international thieves—bent his bleak gaze upon the floor as Harrison approached the desk. O'Halloran smiled grimly, turning with a warm handclasp to his "one best bet" as Harrison, smiling in answer, his gaze upon the departing figures, said:

"You see, Chief, that day here in the office, he—Sampson—must have stayed behind to listen! I saw his shadow—there was no mistaking it—and so I suspected he was in with the river pirates. The rascal was, as you might say, caught in his own trap!"

O'Halloran grunted, leaning back in his chair.

"Well, I think that'll hold 'em for a while, Lieutenant," he made answer with a grin.

A FORTUNE TELLER'S PROMISE

DETECTIVES of the Astoria precinct in Long Island City are investigating an unusual story and searching for two gypsy women who are alleged to have enticed Mrs. James Raz into giving them nearly $1,000, by tales of good fortune and great riches. The gypsy women visited the lady's home three times, each time taking away sums of money, her husband told the the detectives. The sum alleged to have been taken by the women represents the savings of the young couple during their five years of married life.

The story which Raz told the detectives is that a woman dressed in gaudy colors visited his home while he was away. She read Mrs. Raz's palm and told an alluring story of great wealth, which she saw centered around Mrs. Raz and her husband, and all manner of good fortune provided Mrs. Raz give the gypsy money, and the more money the better the fortune. Mrs. Raz gave the woman $40.

The following day the gypsy woman with a companion is alleged to have again visited Raz's home. The two fortune tellers reiterated their story with a still greater description of the coming gold, all with the proviso they receive more money. Mrs. Raz then gave them $50, according to the detectives.

On Saturday the first fortune teller came for the third time. Mrs. Raz had not told her husband of the wealth which she was buying him, but she went to the savings bank and drew out over $800 which they had saved. This she is alleged to have turned over to the gypsy after a promise of fabulous wealth.

Unable to keep the secret to herself of their coming good fortune, Mrs. Raz confided in her husband, who immediately set out for the Astoria station-house to repeat the story to the detectives. The fortune tellers have not been seen anywhere in the vicinity since.

By Virtue of Discipline

By P. T. RAYMOND

CHAPTER ONE

HIS new uniform fitted his well-knit body as if he had been moulded into it. His six feet one or so carried hardly an ounce of surplus flesh; in fact, his whole aspect was that of clean virility and military training.

Steve Cole was a new addition to the local police department of the city. He was assigned to Precinct 5. No tougher district was to be found anywhere.

As he answered the roll in a clear, firm voice, his broad shoulders thrown back, chin drawn in and eyes front, nearly all the boys warmed up to him. He had been a soldier, there was little doubt. Such men as he were welcome in the department, especially in 5, where gangsters and other underworld denizens kept the police on tenterhooks.

As we marched from the station in double file I was beside him. He was assigned to the beat adjoining mine, therefore by the time we went off duty at one p. m. a strong friendship had sprung up between us.

As I had deducted from the beginning, he had been a soldier. He had been overseas, fought in every major engagement, and was discharged a top-sergeant with several citations for bravery.

All this he confessed reluctantly, never once using the egotistic pronoun "me." I dragged his story from him in monosyllables, and he spoke as if he were referring to a third person.

The department had only been organized a few months. A walk-out by more than two-thirds of the old patrolmen had crippled the service for a few weeks.

But the loyal ones who stood by their "guns" were steadily whipping the rookies into shape. Most of the recruits were trained soldiers fresh from the World War.

Of course, like in all labor discords, there was a feeling of resentment towards the newcomers by the faithful old members that time alone would bridge. Thus matters stood when Steve Cole entered the department, and every man, from the captain down to the janitor, was captivated by his ever-evident smile and affable manner.

For several months our nightly patrol went on. Now and then Cole would bring in some violator, but never once did he encounter the hard-boiled element, who could "smell" a bluecoat a block away.

Then there came a shake-up in the whole department. Even Headquarters was hit. Detectives were assigned to "pounding" the pavements again. The harness-bull was shorn of his trimmings and sent to Headquarters. Our station was hit the least of all. A day policeman was sent to Headquarters and a dethroned king of the plain-clothes squad named Jim Saul was sent to 5.

He was an officer of the thick-neck type. Broad of shoulders. squatty, lower jaw protruding, he had by constant bullying and browbeating moulded his whole being into a brutal, feared officer.

Why he was reduced was common talk. Graft was the important factor hinted at. Although they never got him dead to rights, which would have meant a term in prison, the commissioners had enough on Saul to dump him on the street.

From the very first he was quarrelsome, as he felt his disgrace keenly.

A few weeks after he had been "wished" on us he was waiting at the box for the

night relief, the first half going on from six p. m to one a. m. As Steve Cole and I strode up to where Saul was leaning indolently against the iron post on which the police-box hung, I saw at once he had been drinking. In fact, I could smell it.

His piggy eyes were filmy; his broad, coarse features were crimson to the very roots of the thin hair on his low forehead. In fact, his whole aspect bespoke alcoholic indulgence.

I spoke to him pleasantly enough, as did Steve Cole. He never as much as noticed me, but leered at the young officer and spoke with venom.

"How long have you been one of th' cake-eatin' scabs?"

I opened my mouth to voice a rebuke, but the words died on my lips as I looked at Steve Cole. His handsome face drained to an ashy hue and his brow puckered in a puzzled fashion as he faced his insulter. Then he smiled.

"About five months, Mr. Saul," Cole told him. There was no trace of anger or animosity in his clear, soft tone. I was stunned.

The leer on the ex-Headquarters man's face deepened. He detached his huge body from the post and lumbered up to Cole.

"Say!" he snarled hoarsely, shoving his mottled and florid countenance into the face of the younger officer, "be a man—not a rat. Go get another job! Your betters are walkin' ther streets on account of the likes of you! Yer d—— scab; that for you."

With a quick motion he gave Steve Cole a resounding slap across the face and stepped back ready for fight.

Caught unawares, the young policeman staggered back. Again his face went white, except where the imprint of the assaulting hand had left its livid imprint.

"Why did you do that?"

His mild question knocked me stiff. I now noticed that his color flowed back, and he even smiled. Then he nodded to me and walked away.

I also left the half-drunken bully and strode down the street. To say I was disgusted would be putting it mild. I could hardly believe my eyes. I knew that the assault on Cole was unprovoked, but should Steve prefer charges against Saul, I would be obliged to testify against a brother officer. I didn't like that, although I had no liking for the dethroned inspector. A policeman's life at the best is not a bed of roses, for there are always plenty of private citizens watching for the chance to blast us.

But if I were called on I decided to say I didn't see it. Just think of it! A big, husky youth, a war veteran with several citations, half Jim Saul's age—bah! He was a fourflusher. He was yellow. I'm one of the old guard, and I wouldn't take that insult if I got the beating of my life.

It was ten o'clock before I met Cole again. He did not wish to avoid me. He was apparently as unconcerned as ever. In fact, he smiled.

That smile pulled the stopple of my bottled-up disdain.

"By gad, Cole," I growled, waxing up to a white heat, "I'm surprised. The police force is no place for a quitter who wears a white feather on his breast instead of a badge."

He eyed me fixedly, then silently turned on his heel and walked away.

After our relief at one o'clock the following morning we reported at the station and were assigned to house duty. Steve Cole was stretched out full length on a bench in the guard room seemingly asleep. I was dozing on a chair, sucking the bottom out of an old corncob pipe, when the bell over my head rang, summoning us to the desk.

"There's been a shooting scrape down in the Cove district," said the desk sergeant, "and some one got hurt. You and Cole go down and see what you can find out. Officer Lally on that beat thinks it was Bull Levy who was burning powder. If you find him, bring him in. That's all."

We lost no time covering the few blocks to the seat of the trouble. Although we walked side by side, never a word was spoken by either of us. We met Officers Lally and Sullivan standing with their backs against Bloomer Tate's near-beer saloon, keeping wary eyes on a small crowd that had gathered on the sidewalk. Inside was a Headquarters man grilling the bar-

tender and a porter. The saloon was clear of loungers and customers, and the wounded man had been hurried to the hospital.

I was talking to Lally, and didn't miss Cole until Sullivan mentioned the fact that he had gone inside the saloon. They hadn't heard of the affront hurled at the young officer by Jim Saul, nor—what I termed—the cowardly climax.

"Cole's gone inside," informed Sullivan. "A likely lad, and looks as if he might have some sand in his make-up."

I could hardly suppress a grunt of disdain. Sand! Mustard-seed more likely. Sully was one of the old force, and he, too, liked Cole.

CHAPTER TWO

WHEN Steve Cole entered the dimly lighted saloon he looked all about, his clear gray eyes oscillating slowly, taking in every detail. At the farther side of the room, close to the distant end of the beer-soaked bar, the young officer's glance paused on a formidable-looking door. It wasn't the door so much that held his attention, but as he gazed at it his keen eyes noted that the knob turned slowly and the door opened about an inch. Then, in another instant, it closed noiselessly.

I was standing behind him then, and he whispered the incident to me.

We both whirled as the Headquarters' man was angrily denouncing the two men he was grilling.

"You're a d—— liar, Chick," he thundered, banging the bar with a ponderous fist. "You know right well that Bull Levy did the shooting. You lie when you say he hasn't been in here for three days. I'll bet a plugged penny that he isn't over a million miles away"—here his glance strayed to the door at the end of the bar—"so I'm going to look around."

The Headquarters man turned, and for the first time was aware of our presence.

"Keep an eye on these birds," he requested, after nodding a greeting, "I'm going to see what that room contains before I close up this dump."

The man from Headquarters stood before the door and listened. No sound. He turned the knob slowly. The door refused to yield. He shook it, demanding that it be opened in the name of the law. Still no sound. He turned to the worthies we were guarding.

"Got a key for this door?" he asked.

They both shook their heads, and the barkeeper growled.

"Dat's Boomer's private office. He's got the only key. Dey ain't nobody in there."

"Another lie," now accused a soft, clear voice.

I turned and stared at the speaker. It was Steve Cole. He then addressed the plainclothes man.

"A moment ago, officer, I saw that doorknob turn, and the door opened about an inch and closed again. There's somebody inside—was then, anyhow."

With a bull-like roar the Headquarters man threw his huge body against the door. It never budged. Again he charged; this time there was a faint cracking of wood. Another assault; this time a panel split. A fourth attack; this time a muffled roar came from within, and the Headquarters man uttered a low moan, crashed to the floor and lay still.

The shot brought Patrolman Lally in running. I had my gun out then, and was blazing away at the splintered door, while Cole, who had sprung to the stricken officer's side, had drawn his body out of range of my bullets, or any that might respond.

And respond they did. A bullet singed my cheek, while another clipped a piece of cloth from my coat sleeve. My revolver was empty. I turned to Cole, who was bending over the prone Headquarters man.

"Give me your gun," I cried.

He arose slowly. The firing had ceased as he walked towards me.

"He's dead," he said grimly. "Shot through the heart."

He passed over his service revolver and looked me full in the face. And what a look! His large gray eyes were as cold as ice. His firm jaw was set like a bear-trap, and his hands clinched until the knuckles showed white beneath the skin. A

riot call had been sent in, and Sullivan was holding off the nocturnal vultures that crowded about the entrance.

"I'm going in and bring that murderer out," Cole declared with no show of emotion. "If he gets by me—you know what to do."

The next instant he bounded across the floor and fairly hurled his body at the door, which crashed in. Shots whined over his prostrate body as he lay on the fallen floor.

The next instant he was erect and among them. I was somewhat startled to see the large number of underworld denizens the room harbored.

If there was one there were a dozen. And a worse gang of crooks never wore prison stripes. There were petermen, stick-ups, loft-men and other crooks of the district. Every man jack of them, I knew, toted a gat. But to go back to the fight. I'll never forget it as long as I live. I thought the boy was yellow. I had once told him so. But I now swore that I'd crawl on my knees and beg his forgiveness. How I wished that Jim Saul could have seen the fight. "Good-night, Jim Saul, when you cross Steve Cole's path again," I was thinking.

The fight was furious, and with fury Cole met it. He was unarmed, and had neglected to draw his night-stick. Straining and heaving, he struck out with his fists, then closed with his opponents, whose arms tried to encircle him and whose clutching, sinewy hands tore murderously at his throat. The crooks did not use their guns, for fear of shooting one of their friends. I fired, as I saw a knife flash in the sputtering lamp-light, but missed. The knife must have pricked Cole, for I heard a cry of rage, followed by an agonizing scream that could be heard above the turmoil. A body, with legs kicking out wildly, was lifted over the heads of the struggling mass of humanity and sent crashing against the wall.

Again many hands clutched at his throat and tore at the tattered uniform in their struggle to escape. At last he again, with a tremendous effort, wrenched himself free and reeled back to the door, gasping. For a moment Cole fought for breath, wiping the moisture from his dripping face, fumbling for his "billy" in his hip pocket.

Lally and I, with drawn revolvers, forced our way past the spent policeman. He swayed in the doorway and his eyes roved over the crowd of crooks as we marched them out at the business ends of our guns. The reserves were now swarming through the door, and in less time than it takes to tell it we had securely handcuffed the worst gang of yeggs that ever stood before the bar of justice.

I turned as the last prisoner vanished. A lump rose in my throat as I stood before the valiant young policeman. He wasn't looking at me. His eyes were glued on a couch that stood against the wall, where there lay an automatic revolver.

Without turning he spoke in a low, strained whisper.

"Is Bull Levy in that bunch you pinched?" He inclined his head towards the broad back of a policeman who was leading the last of the prisoners to the waiting wagon.

"No," I assured him. I knew Bull Levy, and was sure his ugly visage was missing from the round-up. "Why?"

I never got a reply to my brief question. With hands locked behind his back Steve Cole walked slowly towards the couch. He wasn't looking at it, his eyes were fixed on the ceiling.

He halted before the couch, and as I watched him with puzzled thoughts I became aware that he was moving with his foot the revolver away from where it lay. Daylight was peeping through the barred window in the room. The clang of the patrol wagon as it rolled away from the curb side left the raided saloon in silence.

With a quick move, faster than the eye could follow, Steve Cole grasped the head of the heavy couch and hurled it aside with a resounding crash. A table, chair and a bust and pedestal were mowed down in its wake.

The prone figure of a man sprang erect and closed in a deadly embrace with the young policeman. The next instant they were rolling on the floor. Steve Cole was fighting with his last remaining strength. The other, who was no other than Bull

Levy, was clawing, biting and struggling to master his captor. I danced around looking for an opening to hit Bull so I could relieve Cole, who I knew was all in.

There was not a chance. They broke and rolled apart and both rose to their feet at the same time. I leveled my revolver at Bull's head, ordering him to elevate his hands.

"To hell wid yer," he snarled, springing for the door. I pulled the trigger and the gun roared, but missed. The bullet found its mark in the window casing. But Bull never reached the door.

Steve Cole, who had been reeling around and wiping the blood from his eyes, cleared the space between Bull and the way to liberty. The two bodies met with a sickening impact.

Stunned, both men drew apart and glared at each other. Both the violater and the upholder of the law stood tense, waiting. Then the crook struck.

Steve Cole saw the swift blow coming, speeding straight at his jaw. Hardly perceptible was the side movement of his head, but the blow glanced just above his ear. His own right fist shot out like a dart of flame. His left followed instantly, the last ounce of his waning strength behind it.

Bull Levy crashed to all-fours. But hardly had he landed when he staggered to his feet again, his face streaming crimson through the split lips. Reeling, he lunged forward, his hands hung loosely at his side, then again he struck.

But the young policeman beat him to it. Another crushing blow came from Cole's fist, the momentum sending him sprawling over the knocked-out crook. Then they crashed to the floor together. The fight was over.

CHAPTER THREE

THAT morning at roll-call Jim Saul was not in the station to answer to his name. He had been reported sick, so another officer was assigned to cover his patrol. Two days later the slain Headquarters man was buried with the honors of a martyr, and less than ten hours later Bull Levy, who confessed that he fired the shot, was indicted for the crime.

Steve Cole, none the worse for his terrible battle, was working as usual on his night patrol.

He was the hero of the station, and we all chuckled at the thought of what was coming to Jim Saul if he ever came to grips with Steve.

Saul was listed as sick for over a week. When he did report for duty he asked for night work. His request was granted, and he was assigned on the same shift that Cole and I were on.

I could see plainly what had caused his sickness. His eyes were bloodshot, his face bloated and mottled with livid spots. The poisonous hooch he had been imbibing had not sweetened his temper any, for he growled and cursed at everything that happened.

Saul had heard about the raid and the wonderful fight Steve Cole put up against ten to one odds. He also heard of Steve's cleverness in unearthing the murderer. Saul sneered and spat with disgust.

"All bunk," he snorted. "Playing to the gallery. He was nutty with fright, and didn't know what he was doing. He's a yellow dog, and I'm going to bat him in the puss one of these days and tell him so."

"Oh, boy," I told Lally. "What an awakening that bully'll get. I wouldn't miss that meeting for a flock of Liberty Bonds. No, no. No more than two blows will be struck. Cole'll strike one, and Bully Saul'll strike the floor."

A light snow had fallen that night. Just enough to make it slippery and sloppy.

The clock in the guard-room tolled the half-hour past midnight. Jim Saul, his characteristic grouch in evidence as much as ever, sprawled on a bench, his feet projecting out on the floor, his chin on his chest, seemingly sleeping.

Cole, who had just came in, was brushing the snow from his coat. A prisoner was calling for water. He laid aside the brush, filled a tin dipper at the sink and turned and walked in the direction of the cell-room. He was obliged to pass the

bench on which Saul was dozing. I was startled from a quiet smoke by a crash, the clang of tin against concrete and a volley of angry oaths.

Instantly I was all attention, as was every policeman in the room. At a glance I now saw what had happened. Cole, in his haste to quench the burning thirst of the hooch-poisoned drunkard in the cell, had stumbled over the ex-Headquarters man's extended legs.

Every man jack of us was filled with elation. Here was where a gross insult would be wiped out, where a bully, who thought himself above us, would get the beating of his life. Lally and I had seen Steve Cole fight. There would be nothing to it. Even our superiors in the outer office would turn a deaf ear to what I knew was going to happen.

Cole scrambled to his feet, his face flushed, and arranged his ruffled uniform. Jim Saul, his face aflame with hatred and passion, stood over Cole with clinched hands.

"What do you mean by kicking me that way?" roared the infuriated Saul. "For two pins I'd knock you dead. Yer four-flushin' rat, apologize, or I'll bat yer all over the room."

Every policeman in the room was on his feet now. Even a few of the prisoners who had partly sobered up, although their cells were out of the line of vision of the guard-room, were yelling loudly and cheering the men on.

Steve Cole's handsome face was a study. Although it was not pale, a little gray spot appeared on each cheek. He was looking Jim Saul square in the face. I got dizzy when he smiled, for I expected to see him wipe up the floor with Saul. But to our astonishment he said meekly:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Saul, but there must have been some snow on my shoes and I slipped. I hope I didn't hurt you."

"Good Lord!" I gasped. The bell heralding roll-call now rang. As I stood answering to my name, it's small wonder that the desk sergeant didn't file charges against me for being drunk, I was so surprised. The crowd that filed out of Precinct No. 5 that morning was more like a bunch of mourners at a funeral than a squad of policemen going on duty.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEXT day Steve Cole put in a request for a transfer. I was glad, for I could hardly look him in the face after the humiliating scene in the guard-room. He offered no excuses nor explanations. Two days later he was sent to the 16th Precinct, a Back Bay station.

Less than three weeks later I was not a bit surprised by learning that charges had been preferred against Jim Saul. Graft was the nature of the complaint, and a few days later a trial board of three captains found him guilty, and he was summarily discharged from the force.

On Monday I was seated before a blazing fire of logs in my living-room, thinking of past events, and now and then glancing out the window at the swirling snowflakes. Try as I might, I couldn't drive from my mind the three scenes I had witnessed in which Cole figured.

It seemed hardly conceivable that the man who had fought so heroically against such overwhelming odds would act as Cole did. The whole affair was too profound for me, so I arose with the intention of knocking off a few hours sleep before going on duty, when the front door-bell rang.

Being a childless widower, the remuneration I received every two weeks for my services to the public hardly enabled me to hire a servant, so I walked to the door and admitted Steve Cole.

"Do you know where Jim Saul has gone?" he asked, standing before the warming glow of the sputtering logs. "He left Boston, I understand. The landlady at his rooming-house thinks he has gone down in Maine to the lumber camps."

I peered at him in wonderment. He never turned, but gazed abstractedly into the fire.

"Why, no," I stammered, "I haven't heard from him since he was broke. Why?"

He turned around and faced me. It was then that I saw something strange in the

smoldering depth of his gray eyes. Aside from that, his demeanor was as puzzling as it had formerly been.

"Oh, nothing," he breathed in a low tone. Then, as he turned to take his leave, he added in the same velvety tone: "I'm turning in my badge next week."

"You're what?" I gasped, hardly believing my ears.

Steve smiled grimly, nodded his head and shrugged his shoulders as he pulled open the door.

"It's true, old friend," he said and there was a husky inflection in his voice when he added: "I'm going to rough it for a time. Good-by."

CHAPTER FIVE

AT roll-call a week later Steve Cole turned in his badge, twisters, gun and stick. Although the young policeman had only been attached to the 16th Precinct a short time, Captain Davis expressed regret at his sudden resignation.

Cole, too, dropped out of sight a few days later, so all the past was but a memory to me in the solitary environment of my home.

January came, and with the birth of the new year a real, old-fashioned winter. Snow was plentiful, and the mercury in the thermometer was paying ardent court to the zero point.

After being on duty one day I returned home to find a letter shoved under the door. It was from a firm of lawyers, requesting me to call at their office at my earliest possible opportunity.

I made haste to the street and number printed on the letterhead, and soon was in conference with a trio of hard-faced, grim solicitors.

It proved to be another of those miraculous happenings of retiring at night a poor man and arising in the morning to find yourself wealthy.

An uncle whom I hardly knew, when young, bought a huge tact of timber land down in Maine and had died. He was a bachelor, and had no other relatives, therefore I was his sole heir.

His estate was in a wild section called White River. With a partner, an ex-army major named McLaughlin, he had bought up about everything in that vicinity, the result of which was that they had amassed a large fortune.

Would I resign from the department and co-operate with Major McLaughlin in looking after my late uncle's affairs? I did. And in less than twenty-four hours I had settled my affairs in Boston and was speeding on a fast train for White River.

I found that Major McLaughlin, a veteran of the Civil War, although nearly eighty years of age, was still active and a pleasant-mannered gentleman. He had all the traits of a born soldier, as was plainly evident when conversing with our foremen.

We spent the first day among the choppers and loggers. That night we made a call at the mess-house where our two hundred lumberjacks were seated devouring beans and bacon.

All heads went up as we entered. Those brawny masters of the giant pines, oaks and hemlocks ceased chewing and gazed at us in respectful silence.

"Boys," the major boomed out, flourishing his hand in my direction, "this is Edward Dickson. He is your late beloved employer's nephew, and he came here to fill his uncle's shoes."

They rose to a man and greeted me. Just then I noticed one of the men who sat seemingly eating, his features hidden as he bent over his plate.

Something about the stooped figure struck me as being vaguely familiar. The major noticed that the man paid no attention to me. Sharp and incisive his voice rang out.

"Saul," the name reverberated to every nook and cranny in the room, "on your feet this instant."

Like a monstrous steel spring uncoiled the figure sprang erect, sullen and defiant.

Then I saw that he was the dethroned wardman and disgraced policeman—Jim Saul.

The next day I came upon him hewing the base of a mighty pine with mighty

strokes of a double-bladed ax. I had learned that he was greatly feared and disliked in the camp, and only a few rascals were allied with him. These ruffians follow the lumber camps, but are weeded out when their true characters become known.

"How long have you been on the payroll, Jim?" I asked him.

"About two months," he growled. Then his bleary eyes lit up with a flash of anger. "Don't yer try to lord it over me, Dickson, even if yer had the devil's own luck ter fall into your old uncle's shoes; I'm——"

I silenced him with a wave of my hand. He knew me, and he knew that my record as a member of the Boston police department was one to be proud of.

"You're just a common lumberjack now, Jim Saul"—I finished the passage he had begun—"and don't you forget it. From now on you address me as Mr. Dickson. Bear that in mind. If that don't suit you, turn in your ax and go to the office and get your time."

I left him taking his spite out of the defenseless pine.

CHAPTER SIX

A FEW weeks before the spring drive a large number of the men employed in our camp were leaving and going to the nearest cities in quest of hooch. Other camps likewise affected were offering top wages and a limited amount of whisky a day for good men.

The thirsty ones flocked there like the immortal Forty-niners. I marveled that Jim Saul stuck to us. But he did, and never a word had passed between us since the day I told him where he stood.

I telephoned to several employment agencies in the big cities, and one afternoon a contingent of would-be lumberjacks from New York arrived at the camp.

I was seated behind my desk, entering a brief record of each applicant in a book, when my head went up quickly as one of the ragged crowd gave the name of Will Jones.

I laid aside my pen and stared at him. The pseudo Will Jones was Steve Cole. Yes, there he stood smiling a greeting. I extended my hand, and he gripped it heartily. I thought I detected a glistening moisture in his eyes as he squeezed my hand, mumbled his pleasure on seeing me again and congratulated me on my good fortune.

He had changed but little, if any, in fact. He bore himself erect and soldierly, and was attired in a neat, but cheap, suit of clothes and top-coat. I asked him why he sought such rough employment and he smilingly answered:

"Just for a change," then asked in the same breath, "is Jim Saul employed in your camp?"

I looked at him sharply, but his face was like a mask. I waved him to one side of the waiting line and asked him to see me when I was through with the other applicants.

Why did he ask if Jim Saul was in camp? If he thought his enemy was there and feared him why did he come there? As the last man's name was scrawled on the book I summoned the young ex-policeman.

"Yes, Steve," I informed him in reply to his query, "Jim Saul is employed in this camp. If you wish to change your mind about working here I shall not detain you. I'll send you back to the railroad and give you a week's pay."

My caustic suggestion seemed to hurt, for his handsome features took on a pained expression and he shook his head.

"No, Ned—I beg your pardon—Mr. Dickson," he corrected himself respectfully, "I came here to work."

That night at supper in the "chuck-house" the two men met face to face across the table. Steve smiled. There was something grim and uncanny in that smile of Cole's.

Saul glared back, pop-eyed. He arose heavily and, cocking his head to one side, raised his hands in mock benediction.

"Gentlemen of the White River camp"—he began and all eyes were turned toward him; some even forgot they were hungry and laid down their knives and forks—"a new recruit has joined our mighty forces." Saul went on: "As always has

been our custom, he must be given a nickname and christened in real form. I will nominate myself his sponsor. That thing," he leered satanically, pointing a stubby finger at Steve Cole, "is the one I'm going to dub with the fitting name The Yellow Rat!"

Before any one suspected his intention, or could raise a hand to intercept it, Jim Saul seized a pitcher filled with water that was standing on the table before him and dashed the contents into the upturned face of Steve Cole.

Every man was on his feet in an instant. Growls of anger could be heard on all sides. Most of the lumberjacks were hard, rough men, but the sense of fairness was strong within them.

I waited spellbound for the next move. In fact, I unlimbered a .45 that I always carried, knowing the danger of encountering a drunken, discharged lumberjack. My eyes ran over the standing men at the tables. Most of them wore dark, menacing scowls, while a few of Jim Saul's henchmen smiled with amusement.

Then I turned my gaze on Steve Cole. He was standing erect, water running in tiny rivulets down his marble-white face.

As he brushed the water from his eyes I was startled by what I saw in their depth. They were blazing pools of hate.

The momentary silence was broken by one of Saul's pals, a half-breed Frenchman.

"By gar," he chuckled, leering into the damp face of the young ex-policeman, "he am some damn rat."

Steve Cole's powerful arms shot out like piston-rods. He grasped the Frenchman by the shoulder and above the knee. The half-breed insulter squirmed and fought to break the grip of steel that was slowly lifting his body from the floor. Wiggling, screaming and striking about with hands and feet, the Frenchman was lifted bodily over Cole's head, poised there for an instant, then sent crashing against the wall of the mess-house. His broken body slid to the floor and lay still.

Aghast I waited, my hand gripping my hidden gun. Steve Cole was aroused now, and I intended to see that he'd get fair play.

Another of Saul's followers sprang from the table and rushed at Cole. A crashing blow between the eyes put him out of the running for the time being. Then Cole turned his ashy face to Saul. Never before or after have I seen such murderous hate delineated on the visage of a human being.

"Jim Saul!" he exclaimed, his voice vibrating like a harp string, "you've insulted me for the last time. I'm going to give you a man's chance, although you don't deserve it. You're coming outside with me, and you're going to fight. Understand—fight. When this crowd returns to finish their meal, either you or I will not be with them. Outside, you dog, or I'll drag you out."

I could hardly suppress a grin of pleasure as I saw the blood drain from the bully's face. I always knew he was a coward at heart, and now that he was face to face with a he-man, shorn of gun, club and authority, he was flying distress signals.

But his bluff was called, and as he had no option in the matter now he must live up to the reputation he had established since he came to White River, or beat a hasty retreat in disgrace.

Out he went with a forced pretense of swagger.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SAUL and Steve Cole are talked about in lumber camps to the present day. Saul fought like a trapped beast. He brought into play all the foul tactics he could master, striving in vain to stay the powerful smashing demon who was slowly battering him to a bloody pulp.

Cole fought carefully at first. Then the smoldering rage ignited, and like a fiend incarnate he tore murderously into his opponent, his merciless fists discoloring and tearing his face to ribbons.

Battered almost beyond recognition, Saul lay on the ground. He made no effort to arise, as the panting young ex-policeman stood over him.

"Get up, Jim Saul," Cole breathed gaspingly. "Get up and fight."

But Saul only groaned and rolled over.

Cole reached down, and with a mighty heave he yanked the sagging body to its feet and slammed him against a near-by tree.

Holding his victim at arm's length, Steve Cole began to inflict a terrible volley of blows with his free right hand.

The gory body again sank to the ground. I could now see that the infuriated Cole was bent on killing his tormentor. I rushed to his side and seized his arm.

"He's badly licked, Steve," I said. "That's enough."

Cole wrenched his arm from my grasp and whirled on me in his fury. My heart skipped a beat, and the blood froze in my veins as I looked into his burning eyes. He was mad. Stark mad, I thought.

"This is my fight," he panted, his tone simmered down to a snake-like hiss. "Don't you butt in, or——"

He turned again and lifted up Jim Saul's inert body.

I looked appealingly to the awe-stunned crowd for help, as the crazed man began dealing sledge-hammer blows upon the unconscious form again. No one made a move in response to my mute appeal. They also feared he had gone mad, and knew how dangerous it was to interfere with such a man.

I was about to take drastic measures to save Cole from committing murder and had drawn my revolver. God knows I hated to do it, but I must wound him to save him from himself.

I raised the gun and took aim at his arm, but before I could pull the trigger the gun was whipped from my hand, and I turned and looked into the stern face of Major McLaughlin.

"Wait," he commanded. With a quick stride he stood at Steve Cole's side.

"Attention!" he snapped out.

I blinked and thought that I, too, had gone batty. Steve released his hold on Jim Saul's body, which slid to the ground. His spine stiffened as he squared his broad shoulders. The maniacal light slowly receded from his eyes, leaving them clear and soft.

With chin drawn in, his heels clicked together and he swung a half-turn and faced the major.

Like lightning his right hand, with palm exposed, snapped to his forehead. It remained there, as the major slowly touched his woolen cap in acknowledgment. Steve Cole snapped his hand to his side, swayed and pitched forward into the major's arms in a dead faint.

"I've seen cases similar to the Cole case before," the major was telling me afterwards between puffs of a black briar pipe. "I surmised that he had been a soldier by his bearing. Maddened by the insults and abuse hurled at him by Jim Saul, he was temporarily insane. Discipline is sometimes very strong in a good soldier. They become a slave to it. Take the escaped convict, for an example. He has been known in his flight for liberty to get the drop on one of the prison officers. Cool heads know that death lurks in the frowning bore of the desperate man's gun, so they have knocked their man off his guard by snapping out a prison command, such as "Get right!" a term used in most of the Western prisons.

"It was the same with Cole. Response to that one command for several years had been automatic. Thank the Lord, it worked, for I like that boy, and I'd hate like the devil to see him hurt—maybe lose an arm —for a brute like Jim Saul."

The Major puffed away in silence as I mulled over what he told me. Then another thought struck me, and I looked up inquiringly.

"But, Major," I ventured eagerly, "why didn't he beat up Jim Saul when he insulted him before? Cole fought like a demon the night he captured Bull Levy, but always fought shy of Saul until this time."

The Major knocked the dead ashes from his pipe and refilled it before he made a reply.

"Discipline again, my boy," he blinked knowingly. "As a sworn member of the police force, he knew it was a breach of the rules to engage in a personal encounter with a brother officer. He suffered men-

ally under the affrontment, but bided his time till Jim Saul was dismissed from the department. Cole didn't come here to work. He was after Saul. No longer connected with the police department, he set out to punish the scoundrel for his insults."

"But why did Saul hate him so intensely?"

"Cole told me. It was all on account of a girl that Steve won from Saul."

It was clear to me now that Steve did not want his wife dragged into the feud, and for that reason principally he had endured all of Saul's insults in silence. I had more respect for him than ever now, and it is a foregone conclusion that I kept Steve with me until he decided to return to the force.

A FACILE SWINDLER

AT home in London, Paris or New York, Frederick Brokaw was taken to Washington to face his tenth prison term for obtaining money under false pretenses.

"Most interesting crook in years," Inspector Coughlin called the slight, light-haired prisoner, thirty-two years old, international swindler, with a record in most cities in the country.

Brokaw's "racket" is all his own, detectives said. His last job was a sample of the exploits which have made him known to every detective bureau. He went to the New York Public Library and pored over business reference books. He found Thomas Porter & Sons of Philadelphia had a correspondent in Scotland named Davidson.

Brokaw went to Washington, telephoned Philadelphia, saying with a careful English accent he was Davidson's nephew, William, on the way to meet his mother in Florida. Would they send him an advance from his uncle's account? Thomas Porter & Sons were charmed to send $200.

"It was too easy," Brokaw told detectives. "It didn't give me the old kick I usually get from trimming smart business men."

Detective J. F. Mintern found a letter was awaiting Brokaw at the American Express office, No. 65 Broadway, and when he called for it arrested him.

Brokaw said he is the son of H. A. Brokaw, a merchant of Tacoma, Wash. One of his first frauds was collecting several thousand dollars from Representatives and Senators in Washington in small amounts by telling them of his father's political power "out on the Coast."

In ten arrests, he told detectives, he has been convicted nine times, once was paroled and has served eight sentences. Out of a century or more of sentences he has been in prison less than five years. He is always a model convict, staying by himself, prominent in the prison Bible class.

His sentences always have been commuted for good behavior.

He was last released after serving two years of a twenty-year sentence in San Quentin in 1920, he said. He joined the road company of "Putting It Over" and in a year saved enough money to go to Paris. He came back two years ago to swindle firms with foreign connections again. He said he played fifteen days under an assumed name in "Secrets," a motion picture, at $20 a day.

Brokaw has been arrested twice in New York, Boston and Buffalo and once each in Pittsburgh, Mineola, Philadelphia, Washington and Berkeley, Cal.

Slick Walton's Decision

By W. J. CAMPBELL

SLICK WALTON darted into the mouth of a convenient dark alley and flattened himself against a telephone pole. He must have time to regain his breath. It was dark in there, too much so to risk running. The least sound might betray him.

His heart pounded madly against his breast and his breath came in jerky gasps. They had been pushing him closely, and even then the slip, slip of rubber-soled shoes reached his ears as some one hurried past his place of concealment. Would they search the alley, and had they seen him enter it?

A minute dragged by. To the hunted man it seemed an hour. He was afraid to move, for one of his enemies might be lurking near. They would not give him a fighting chance in the open. Only by accident had he discovered them on his trail tonight in the yards. It had been a mad chase, but he had succeeded in eluding them in the last few moments.

They were his enemies now, for he had willfully violated a rigid rule of the klan. To do so meant death. And Pinkey Burton, his friend, had done the same. Poor Pinkey! It was only yesterday Slick had heard of the floater being dragged from the river with a knife slit between the ribs. Pinkey had paid the penalty with his life, and now they were after him.

And the police—appeal to them? That would be cowardly, and Slick Walton was no coward. Besides there were some old cases on the docket that might include him. His trips to the "Island" had been too many now.

Somehow he had become tired of being a crook. For years it had been a game of hide and seek with him and the police. They had both won; but more often the bluecoats.

Slick Walton had made a decision, decided to henceforth lead an honest life, to come out in the open, if you please. And if you had asked him what had led to this conclusion, he would have perhaps replied, "None of your business. Maybe I'm tired of this everlasting game of hide and seek," and the answer would have had to remain at that.

The freight yards had been his hope. Slick had some money, but was saving it for an emergency. He would leave town, start anew at some other place, perhaps out in the beautiful country, for it was spring now.

Old forgotten memories rushed through his active brain. He recalled that he had been a farm boy once; but that was now years ago. He wondered what had become of the folks at home and the old farm?

A dark form flitted past the alley's mouth and the sound of hurrying feet died away in the distance. An early milk wagon rattled noisily by and the puff, puff of a locomotive broke the stillness of the night.

Slick waited a few minutes longer and then, carefully, cautiously, began picking his way to the other end of the alley. He reached it in safety. They didn't know where his new room was, neither did the police, for he had moved there but yesterday. If he could but reach it he would be safe for a time at least.

He glanced up and down the street. There was no one in sight. The corner light flickered and then went out. A drizzling rain was beginning to fall.

It was just three blocks to Stumpy Nelson's questionable rooming house. Could he make it?

Slick slid noiselessly out of the alley, spurted across the street and entered an intersecting one.

Picking his way carefully down the dark lane, he came to the street leading to the little park. He must not risk crossing that. So, turning to the left he worked his way by alleys and side streets to the side door of Stumpy's place.

All signs of pursuit had disappeared and Slick breathed a sigh of relief as he inserted his night key and opened the creaky door. Taking the steps softly, he climbed the dark stairway, lighted by a single gas jet at the top landing, and entered his little room.

Locking the door, he threw himself on the bed. He was tired and while resting perhaps some plan would suggest itself by which he could elude the members of the klan who were so determined to get him.

How long he lay there, Slick did not know. He must have fallen asleep, for some one was hammering on the door. He sat up and listened.

Rap, rap, rap, and then, "Open the door, Slick, I know you're in there for I saw you slip in the house not long since. Stumpy had to come across with your room number. Tried to deny you were here, but changed his mind. Come, now, open up or I'll kick the door in."

Silently Walton slipped from the bed and tiptoed to the one little window. It was too much of a drop from the third story to the sidewalk.

They had located his retreat; he was cornered like a rat in a trap. What was the use of fighting further; he was tired—so tired? They would get him anyhow. It was only a question of time.

For a moment all was quiet. Then the sound of shuffling feet on the landing, followed by another attack on the door. It couldn't hold out much longer; already it was trembling on its rusty hinges. A few more kicks from heavy-soled shoes and it must fall.

Slick thought fast. They were many, perhaps, to his one. It would do no good to resist them. At their next meeting they would boast how they snuffed him out. Then like a flash he remembered.

He sprang lightly back on the bed and raised his hands toward the ceiling. It was exactly at the right spot, for they came in contact with the little trapdoor leading into the attic. A slight push and he felt the opening large enough to crawl through.

Grasping the edges, he drew himself up into the stuffy dark chamber and slipped the door back into position. The flashlight in his pocket quickly located the scuttle to the roof. Edging carefully over to it, he breathed a prayer of relief when it yielded to a slight push.

Once on the roof he crawled hastily to the rear of the building and dropped lightly to the kitchen shed. From there to the ground the distance was slight, and Slick was soon scaling the backyard fence.

Across the adjoining lot, along the side of a house and Slick found himself on a narrow street with no one in sight and not a sound of pursuit from the rear.

The long string of cars were moving slowly out on the main line. An open door caught his eye. Sprinting, he caught its open edge, swayed a moment in the air and then swung himself inward, landing safely on the car floor.

Six months later Officer Dolan was speaking to the Chief: "Strange we never heard anything more of Slick Walton after he got away from me that night down at Stumpy's. Guess the rest of the gang must have made way with him or he's gone to other fields."

The Chief's eyes twinkled. "That's just it, Dolan; he's gone to other fields. Here, read this," and he handed the officer a letter.

"CHIEF RYAN: The misguided youth, now a *man*, has found peace and contentment back in the old country home taking care of an aged mother and crippled sister. My former life seems but a dream. They do not know here, and I am satisfied never shall from you. The little lassie's meeting on the crowded corner, in this particular case, accomplished what the law could not.

"JERRY (SLICK) WALTON."

"Well, I'll be blamed!" said Dolan, as he handed back the letter.

The False Truth

By JOHN HOLDEN

IN the luxurious library of a Park avenue apartment, Governor Buller instructed a servant to admit the woman who wished to see him.

It was a warm mid-summer evening and the windows were wide open. Governor Buller had not wished to leave the cool State capital for a week-end visit to the hot city, but private business had compelled him to make the trip. He was in the apartment of his son-in-law, impatient and vexed because his visit had profited him nothing, and he was anxious to get back to his official home and to his duties.

As he awaited the entrance of the caller he gazed casually across the street at a little antique shop that was still open despite the comparative lateness of the hour.

A woman entered—a thin little wisp of a person, garbed in black, gray-haired, and with eyes that glowered with terrible intensity from tear-swollen lids.

"Your honor, I am Mrs. Sanjour," she said timidly.

Governor Buller asked her to be seated. He guessed the object of her visit. Earnest Sanjour, a murderer, was due to be executed the following week, and of course this was his mother, who had come to make the usual beart-broken plea on his behalf.

Refusing such requests was the most disagreeable part of the governor's official life.

The woman seemed strangely able to read his mind.

"You have guessed why I came," she said, her tone flat and dead. "You know already that I am here to beg you to at least commute my son's sentence to life imprisonment."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot," answered Governor Buller. "Your son was fairly tried and justly sentenced."

"On circumstantial evidence," the mother exclaimed bitterly.

"Granted—but what of it?"

"Circumstantial evidence is poor evidence. All you know in this case is that Ernest was a gangster with a jail record, that he was at the scene of the robbery and murder of the payroll messenger, that the fatal gun was found near him in the gutter. The police, unable to catch the real criminal, grabbed him and fastened the crime on him."

"What we know was sufficient for judge and jury."

"It is not sufficient in the eyes of God. My son merely happened to be passing by. He is as innocent of that murder as you are."

The Governor shook his head. All mothers spoke in this strain.

"I'm sorry, but, as I said before, I can do nothing for you. My oath of office compels me to carry out the law."

"Death is too great a punishment for a conviction on mere circumstantial evidence," argued the mother.

"It is the law."

"The law is not infallible. The law years ago used to decree death for a trifling theft. Was that right?"

"It is not considered right nowadays," admitted the Governor.

"The present law is as wrong as the old law. And two wrongs do not make a right."

"Admitting that your contention is correct, two wrongs may nevertheless prevent a dozen wrongs from being committed in the future."

Mrs. Sanjour maintained her self-control with an effort.

"Many a governor has commuted to life imprisonment the death sentence of a man

convicted on circumstantial evidence," she suggested eagerly.

"I would do likewise if I thought your son is innocent," replied the Governor. "But I believe he is guilty; therefore I cannot commute his sentence."

The old woman arose. Her tone was still flat and dead, but terribly tense.

"Then there is no hope? You insist on putting my boy to death on mere circumstantial evidence?"

"In this case the circumstances did not lie."

She glared at him.

"What if I should prove to you that in any case circumstantial evidence may be as false as sin?"

"You cannot do that."

"I can, and I will."

She then left the room. The Governor of the State paced up and down for a moment.

"I don't like the way she said that," he muttered. "It sounded almost like a threat."

Doubtless Governor Buller would have been further alarmed had he followed the visitor's movements after she left him. She went swiftly down the block and, halfway to the corner, in a dark hallway, she clutched the arm of a young man who awaited her.

This was her second son, Walter, whose record was as clean as Ernest's was soiled. Walter had served honorably overseas in the war, had won a marksman's medal in occupied Germany, and now held a good position, which enabled him to support his widowed mother in comfort. But on this occasion he did not act in the manner of a law-abiding man.

"Well?" he questioned tensely.

"He won't do anything," answered his mother. "I pleaded with him in vain. He is as hard as nails."

"He insists that circumstantial evidence is sufficient reason to send Ernest to the chair?"

"Yes."

The young man's teeth clenched so fiercely that little knots showed in his clean-cut cheeks.

"Then we'll have to show him it isn't infallible," he whispered.

The mother looked hastily up and down the street.

"Yes," she breathed.

"I'm ready for my part of your plan. Did you observe the Governor's library carefully? Are conditions just right?"

"Yes." The mother's fingers tightened spasmodically upon her son's wrist. "Go—go while I have the courage to send you," she whispered.

The son regarded her anxiously.

"But have you the courage to do your part?" he queried.

"Yes—go now before the Governor leaves the library—we haven't a minute to spare."

"In exactly five minutes I'll be ready."

They checked their watches to make sure that they agreed to the second.

"In five minutes I'll be ready, too," said Mrs. Sanjour.

Mother and son exchanged determined glances, then parted, one going north and the other south.

At the corner of the block Mrs. Sanjour crossed the narrow street and walked slowly toward the antique shop, which still remained open and which Governor Buller had taken notice of just before the entrance of his unwelcome visitor. She entered it.

"I'm looking for a vase," she stated to the salesgirl, in a manner which did not indicate the mental strain that she was laboring under.

"What sort of vase?" inquired the clerk.

"A black one, at least a foot high and six inches wide at its widest part. Have you any cheap ones that answer that description?"

"I think so."

As the salesgirl brought out the vase, Mrs. Sanjour looked through the plate-glass window to the other side of the street, and up one story to the window in the library where the Governor sat. She smiled with satisfaction when she saw that he was still there and that his window was open. Every other window in the building was closed.

She took the vase from the clerk and

eyed it with approval. But a keen observer might have noted that her attention was not on the vase so much as it was upon her wrist-watch, which indicated that the second-hand was approaching the five-minute limit she had agreed upon with her son.

She set the vase on the palm of her hand and held it out at arm's length, apparently to examine it.

The clerk thought this an unsafe way in which to hold a vase and she cried:

"Be careful——"

The girl never finished the sentence, for at that instant the vase was mysteriously shattered in Mrs. Sanjour's palm, and the old woman uttered a loud cry.

"What's wrong?" cried the clerk as she sprang forward.

Mrs. Sanjour sat down, gasping, unable apparently to utter a word. Her face was as pale as death.

The clerk was sorely puzzled. And no wonder. Not a sound had been heard. Yet the vase in the customer's hand was whole one moment and in pieces the next.

Mrs. Sanjour waved feebly toward the plate-glass window, where a tiny hole now appeared.

"A bullet," she whispered. "Some one shot at me. Phone the police."

The clerk examined the hole.

"You're right," she gasped, and dashed to the phone.

In about ten minutes a uniformed officer and a plainclothes man arrived. The latter examined the hole in the window.

"There's where the bullet entered the shop," he said. "Where did you say you were standing?"

Mrs. Sanjour indicated the spot, and said she did not see who fired the shot.

"Then the bullet should have struck the floor about here." The detective examined the floor about ten or fifteen feet back from the window.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "Here's where the bullet struck after it passed through the vase. It's a fresh hole. Now we can tell from what direction it came." He turned to the clerk. "Have you a long rod of any sort?"

The girl had one and gave it to him. He placed one end on the bullet hole in the floor, then lay down on the floor, pointed the other end at the hole in the window, and sighted along it as though it were a rifle. Then he rose, jotted something in a notebook, and turned to the uniformed policeman.

"The shot," he said, "came from that apartment-house across the street, the third window to the left on the second floor. Run over there at once and arrest whoever is in the room.

The policeman departed.

The detective next went to the basement and returned in a moment with the bullet, which had struck a stone wall after penetrating the floor. He showed it to Mrs. Sanjour and the clerk. It was a steel-jacketed missile.

"That was shot from a high-power rifle," he said. "Such a bullet would not be diverted from its course when it struck the plate-glass window and broke the vase. Therefore the two holes that it made, one in the window and the other in the floor, show the direction from which it came. It could not have been fired from the sidewalk by any one who was not up on a step-ladder, nor by any one on the street unless he was on a high platform, and if any such platform had gone by on a truck one of you would have been sure to notice it, since this street is not a broad one."

Both Mrs. Sanjour and the clerk affirmed that the street outside had been quite empty.

"Therefore the bullet was fired from that apartment-house across the way. When I sighted along the line of the two holes that it made the line pointed to the window I mentioned to the officer, therefore the bullet came from that window."

The clerk nodded.

"That is quite clear," she agreed. "It could not have come from anywhere else."

Mrs. Sanjour agreed also.

"With that much established, we should be able to find the person who fired the shot," said the detective.

He started for the door, paused, and remarked to Mrs. Sanjour:

"I'm going to the room where I sent the officer. Do you wish to come along?"

There was a strange light in the old woman's eyes as she assented.

They crossed the street and entered the apartment-house that she recently came out of. In the corridor they met the uniformed officer.

"There must be some mistake," said the latter. "That third window is in the library where the Governor of the State has been sitting all the evening."

The detective frowned.

"That's very strange. It's hardly likely that the Governor fired the shot."

Mrs. Sanjour also could not believe that the Governor had fired it.

"We'll check up on the window," said the sleuth to the officer. "You go inside and stand at the one you think is third to the left on the second floor, and I'll stay outside and tell you if it's the right one."

This plan was tried, and the policeman appeared at the correct window.

The detective next proceeded to the library, accompanied by Mrs. Sanjour. The Governor was still there. He was keenly interested in the detective's statement.

"You see how the evidence shows that the bullet must have come from your window," said the sleuth.

"But that is impossible," maintained the Governor. "I was here all this evening. A gun could not have been fired in this room without me knowing about it."

"That's right," agreed the sleuth. "Even one that had a silencer on it would have made noise enough to attract your attention."

"Aside from that, I was alone."

"There's no chance that you were chloroformed or otherwise rendered unconscious long enough so that a gun could be fired from here without your knowing about it, is there?"

The Governor frowned.

"Absolutely not. I haven't even been drowsy."

"Did you hear any queer noise at any time?"

"Why, no. Oh, let's see. Come to think of it, I believe I did hear a funny little swish at one time. But I am sure it was made by the breeze coming in at the open window. Anyhow, that has nothing to do with the firing of a high-power rifle."

The detective paced up and down.

"Well, it beats me, sir. When a steel-jacketed bullet makes a hole in a window and another in the floor, the two holes show absolutely from where the ball came, except in a case where the bullet is diverted between the two holes, and, in this case, the light vase certainly did not divert it. Bullets cannot turn corners. And, looking along the line of the two bullet holes, the bullet must certainly have come from this library."

"Nevertheless it didn't," said the Governor sharply.

Mrs. Sanjour now stepped forward. A grim smile was on her pallid features.

"Mr. Detective," she said, "the evidence that the bullet came from this room is what you call circumstantial evidence, is it not?"

"It is," admitted the sleuth.

"If I had been killed in that shop, and a man with a criminal record were found in this room, he would, I presume, be arrested for murdering me?"

"He sure would."

"And probably convicted?"

"Absolutely. Wouldn't he, Governor?"

"In all probability," admitted the latter.

"Even though no weapon were found on him?" questioned the woman.

"Yes," said the detective. "It would be taken for granted that he disposed of the weapon."

"If a weapon were found in the courtyard, say, the judge would reason that he dropped it there?"

"Yes."

"Even if it were proved that the suspect did not know me, and had nothing against me, he would still be convicted for murdering me?"

"That would help him some, but not enough, I fear, to acquit him."

Mrs. Sanjour's tone grew sarcastic.

"But if I had been murdered, and the Governor of the State were found here, instead of a criminal, he, I presume, would not be convicted?"

The Governor and the detective looked at each other, but said nothing.

Mrs. Sanjour's voice rose as she turned to Governor Buller.

"Sir," she said, "you and I had an argument about the value of circumstantial evidence this evening. You refused to commute my son's death sentence to life imprisonment, or order a new trial, even though it was only on circumstantial evidence that he was convicted."

"That is correct, madam," admitted the Governor.

"You maintained that, in my son's case, the doubt of his guilt was so small as to be practically non-existent."

Governor Buller nodded assent.

Her voice rose still higher.

"But here we have a case where circumstantial evidence proves that you fired a shot at me, yet you say you did not do it."

There was no doubting the Governor's interest now.

"I see your point," he admitted. "Go on."

"I will," cried Mrs. Sanjour, her voice rising as emotion and suppressed excitement got the better of her. "I want to tell you, sir, that I know you did not fire the shot, yet the bullet did come from your window, just as the detective here claims it did. I arranged this whole affair with my younger son to prove to you, sir, that circumstantial evidence may be absolutely worthless, as it has been damnably worthless in the case of my older son, who is to die in the electric chair on evidence no better than this evidence that convicts you of shooting at me."

She was so agitated that the Governor tried to soothe her.

"My dear lady," he said, "if there is the slightest chance that a mistake has been made in your son's case I assure you that justice will be done to him."

She tried to control herself.

"I don't understand the lady," said the puzzled detective to the Governor. "She says that the bullet came from your window, yet you did not fire it. Are you sure you were alone in here?"

Mrs. Sanjour interrupted him:

"He was alone, and he was wide awake."

The two men stared at her.

"What you claim is impossible," said the Governor. "The bullet could not have come from this room."

The little old widow whirled upon him.

"Will you save my boy from death when I show you that it did come from this room?"

After a moment's thought the Governor said:

"I will—yes. And I'll see that they give him a new trial, too, if new evidence comes up to warrant it."

Mrs. Sanjour seized his hand and kissed it.

"You are a good man, after all," she said triumphantly. "You have merely been blind, like many people in this world. You see some things, but you do not see everything; you allow little things to escape your attention. For instance, you have paid no attention to the fact that there is a window at the back of this room as well as in front.

"Both windows are wide open. The shot that broke the vase in my hand *did come from* this room, but it *first came into* this room from another apartment in which my son, who is a prize marksman, was stationed with a rifle equipped with a silencer. In other words, he shot through both your windows. The peculiar swish that you heard was the bullet speeding over your head. I was holding the vase so he could hit it. Do you see now that the circumstantial evidence which proved that the bullet came from your library was true in one way, but damnably false in another? Do you see that the circumstantial evidence which condemned my boy to death may be just as false?"

The detective spoke first.

"I'm a dumbbell," he said. "I didn't notice that window at the back."

The Governor grasped Mrs. Sanjour's hand.

"Your son will not die in the chair," he declared.

The Hillsboro Bank Robbery

By FRANK S. SULLIVAN

"HANDS up, please!" exclaimed a not unmusical voice.

Denton Gregory, cashier of The Farmers' State Bank, of Hillsboro, turned his head and looked into the barrel of an automatic pistol held in steady hands protruding through the paying teller's window ten feet away. He involuntarily rose to his feet with his hands elevated.

"Now advance to the center of the room," said the voice behind the pistol.

Gregory obeyed.

"That's fine! Be so good as to keep that pose while I shift the scenes."

The speaker moved to the end of the counter and entered the precinct sacred to the cashier.

"Just open that safe," he said to Gregory.

"Can't be done," argued the cashier. "The time lock is set for nine o'clock."

"It is nine o'clock now; that clock on the wall is two minutes slow."

"Maybe so," replied the cashier, "but the lock is set with that clock."

The holder of the pistol shoved the weapon none too gently against the ribs of the cashier and said, in tones still musical but none the less grim:

"If you don't commence to open that safe in thirty seconds I'll pull the trigger."

"Pull, and be damned!" retorted Gregory. "Then see who'll open the safe for you."

"If you knew whom you are addressing you would be more polite," answered the gunman. "I admire your nerve; I like you, and I deplore the evident necessity of your wife going into mourning, but——"

The speaker was interrupted by the entrance of Ezekiel Hemstetter, president of the bank, who just then came from his private office at the rear.

"Wh-wh-what's the trouble?" inquired the president as he, too, looked into the abyssmal depths of the automatic held in the other hand of the visitor.

"No trouble at all," replied the master of ceremonies, "except that this young man hesitates to comply with my very reasonable request. Have you, perhaps, the combination to the safe?"

"I have," replied the president. "Don't shoot."

"Then see, please, if you cannot open the safe in record-breaking time."

The president broke all records.

"Thank you, thank both of you; now may I trouble you to step into the vault?"

They obeyed, Hemstetter with alacrity, Gregory with muttered objections and imprecations.

The robber then lifted from the safe fifteen thousand dollars in gold and treasury certificates, closed the vault door, turned the knob, sauntered quietly out of the bank, nonchalantly entered a waiting automobile, and was driven away without regard for the speed ordinances of the town.

The Farmers' State Bank had been recently organized, and as yet its patronage was small. It employed but two people, Denton Gregory as cashier, and his wife as assistant cashier and bookkeeper. Mr. Hemstetter spent considerable time in the bank, but as he drew no salary, his coming and going were irregular. It was Gregory's custom to dictate his letters into a dictaphone each morning before the bank opened for business, and Mrs. Gregory typed them when she came down a little later. At the time he was ordered to throw

up his hands he was engaged in dictating letters.

A few moments after the robber left a merchant of the town came in, intending to open an account. Finding no one in attendance, he waited a short time, then went across the street and made his deposit in the First National, complaining that one never could get service from "these farmer banks."

After a little while Mrs. Gregory entered. She was surprised to find no one in the bank. Her first move was to shut off the dictaphone, which was still running. Then she removed her hat, took the cover off the typewriter and prepared to type the letters recorded by the dictaphone, when she heard noises coming from the vault, and on investigation she learned that her husband and the bank's president were confined therein. She did not have the combination to open the vault, and those within could not make themselves heard sufficiently to direct her. She therefore called for assistance, but the door could not be opened. The vault was constructed of brick and was designed merely as a protection against fire. A hole was finally drilled through the brick wall and the prisoners released. All this work required considerable time, and it was nearly two hours after the robbery before the sheriff was notified and reached the bank. The cashier informed the officer what had taken place.

"What did the robber look like?" inquired the sheriff.

"He wore a black mask which completely concealed his features," replied Gregory. "He had a dark-colored, well-tailored suit, a cap of the same material, and wore a pair of tightly fitting gloves, rubber, I should judge. He was slightly under medium height, about five foot six or seven, I would say."

"You're wrong there, Denton," interposed the president. "He didn't wear a cap at all, but a slouch hat pulled well down over his eyes, and he was over six feet tall. I didn't notice his clothes, as I tried to keep my eyes on his face, but I did observe his hat, and I saw that he carried two Colts 45's. They must have been that calibre, anyway."

"Wore gloves, did he?" asked the sheriff. "Then there's no use looking for finger-prints. I guess you fellows were too badly scared to notice much but the guns. Maybe I can get a description from some one on the street."

He made inquiries, but no one could give a description of the robber. The City Marshall had seen an automobile containing two men stop in front of the bank, and had seen one of the men go into the building. He did not think anything wrong about it, did not notice the number or even the make of the car, did not notice the man come out of the bank, nor see the car leave, but it was pointed east when he last saw it.

The sheriff got busy with the telephone and warned all police officers within a hundred miles to be on the lookout, and to search every automobile whose occupants could not give a good account of themselves.

A day or two later detectives came from the Bankers' Association and from the Company that carried the bank's burglarly insurance. But so quietly had the robbers done their work, and so completely had they vanished, that the Insurance Company paid the loss, and the incident was forgotten by every one except Sheriff Jones.

Nearly a year later Sheriff Jones was returning to Hillsboro from transporting a prisoner to the penitentiary. He entered the smoking-car and found it pretty well filled. However, about in the middle of the car he found a seat occupied by but one man, and sat down beside him.

"Nice morning," said the stranger politely. "Everybody seems to take advantage of the nice weather to travel. I never saw such crowds. I had to take an upper berth last night, all the lower ones were gone, and I feel rotten this morning. I never could rest in an upper."

"Yes," answered the Sheriff, "it is a nice morning, and there are lots of people traveling, especially on this line; guess that's because of the scenery. Now there's something worth looking at," he added, pointing out of the window.

The stranger turned his head to look. There was a double click, and the stranger's

wrists were neatly incased in handcuffs.

An exclamation escaped the stranger.

"Very clever," he said with a frown, after his first start of surprise. "May I ask what is the big idea?"

"My idea," replied the Sheriff, "is that you are under arrest."

"Oh! I'm under arrest, am I? And may I inquire for what particular crime I am arrested?"

"For robbing the Hillsboro bank," replied the Sheriff.

"So I robbed the Hillsburg bank, did I?"

"Hillsboro," corrected the Sheriff.

"Oh, well, one bank is as good to rob as another, I guess. How much did I get out of the Hillsdale bank?"

"Hillsboro," corrected the Sheriff again. "Fifteen thousand dollars."

"Piker!" exclaimed the stranger. "Any one who would trifle with such chicken feed deserves to be apprehended. And what was the date of my transgression, if you will be so good as to tell me?"

"I don't know about your later transgressions, but you robbed the Hillsboro bank on the 28th of last September."

"You don't tell me! That was almost a year ago. Surely you do not hold a grudge so long. My memory is poor, especially for trifles, and I seem to be a little hazy as to the particulars of this Hillville bank robbery; would you mind giving me the details?"

"Hillsboro," again corrected the Sheriff. "You went into the bank just a few minutes before it opened for business that morning. You probably expected to find the cashier alone, and you knew you were not likely to be interrupted at that early hour. You stood at the teller's window, leveled your gun at the cashier, whose back was toward you, and made him throw up his hands, which he was not slow in doing. However, you found him less docile than you expected, and I don't know what would have happened if old man Hemstetter hadn't come in and opened the safe for you. The old man was pretty badly scared. Gregory said that you wore a dark suit, cap to match, and rubber gloves, and that you were a man under medium height. Hemsetter didn't notice your clothes, but said you wore a slouch hat, and that you were a giant in size. After you had shut Gregory and Hemstetter in the vault, you took fifteen thousand dollars in gold and treasury certificates, walked out to where your pal was waiting in a car, and beat it."

"But I say, officer, as there were but two witnesses to my bold, bad act, and the descriptions of the robber given by them are irreconcilable, don't you anticipate some difficulty in identifying the robber?"

"Not at all," replied the Sheriff. "When you commanded Gregory to throw up his hands he was talking into a phonograph. He didn't take time to shut the machine off, and it continued to run, and recorded every word, sound and tone you uttered. Too bad you didn't think to smash that record before you left. I never forget a voice. As soon as you spoke I knew I had the right man. But it was not until I had talked with you several minutes and caught your polite lingo that I knew the robber of the Hillsboro bank was 'Gentleman Joe,' the notorious cracksman for whom police and detectives from New York to San Francisco have been searching for the last three years."

The Helping Hand

By ARTHUR WILLIAM BEER

IN HIS younger days, Leslie Crane was always yielding to sudden and freakish impulses. He abhorred the beaten track, and was ever on the alert for any opening that savored of clean adventure.

Sometimes these vagaries ended disastrously, but often good came of them. At any rate, Leslie emerged from his pursuit of adventure with a broader outlook upon life and a keener knowledge and appreciation of human nature.

It was while following out of one of these whims of his fancy that led to—but let Leslie tell the story himself, as he told it to me not long ago, while we were smoking our post-prandial cigars in his handsome residence, not far from the Golden Gate. Said he:

"I was walking down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington one spring afternoon, when I noticed an old fellow on the edge of the sidewalk trying to dispose of a batch of patent knife and scissors sharpeners. He was evidently new to the profession of a street fakir, trade was far from brisk, and he looked particularly miserable and forlorn. What I wanted with one of the things he sold I don't know, but on the impulse of the moment I stepped up and made a purchase. Then the notion struck me that it would be a good idea to help him to get rid of his stock. I did not know a soul in Washington, though I don't suppose it would have made any difference if I had. I made the proposition to the old gentleman, and, although he no doubt thought I was a little crazy, I soon persuaded him to let me have my way. I could have made him a present of a sum representing the value of his whole stock in trade, but it pleased my fancy to try my hand as a street vendor.

"Well, I handed out a good line of talk, and I think I demonstrated to the crowd—for I soon had one around me—that educational advantages had not been lavished upon me in vain. Anyway, I soon had the folks with me and I could not pass out the sharpeners fast enough.

"While I was in the midst of an eloquent harangue, a smart-looking little closed car stopped at the edge of the crowd, and I caught a glimpse of a most beautiful girl at the wheel. She gave me a queer, quizzical look, and right then I sickened of the job in hand and was ready to move on to fresh pastures. I had about exhausted the stock, anyway, and a few seconds thereafter I turned over the proceeds to the old gentleman, and left him calling down blessings upon my head.

"While smoking a cigarette in the hotel lobby the next morning I ran across the following advertisement in the personal of the *Post*:

" 'If the young man who yesterday afternoon was selling knife-sharpeners on Pennsylvania Avenue will call at Apartment 16, "The Goldmere," he will learn something to his advantage.'

"Well, it seemed patent that the advertisement referred to none other than myself; but what was I to learn to my advantage?

"The only way to find out was to respond to the advertisement. Was it worth while? I quickly decided that it was, and about twenty minutes later I emerged from a taxicab before a rather dismal-looking apartment-house in a shabby neighborhood in the northeast section of the city.

"Apartment 16 proved to be on the top floor, and there was no elevator. The place did not look very inviting. What little

discretion there was in my make-up suggested that I abandon the adventure, but my never-say-die spirit overcame the suggestion and advised that, having proceeded thus far, I see the thing through.

"Thereupon I advanced boldly to the indicated door. Before I had time to locate the bell-button, or to knock, the door swung open. Evidently I was expected. No one appeared, however, and there was no word of greeting, though I fancied I heard the sound of fast-receding footsteps.

"Was I walking into some kind of trap? Pshaw! Who would want to trap me? I was young and vigorous, and felt that I would be able to give a good account of myself if molested.

"I entered a dimly lighted but surprisingly well-furnished room, considering the shabbiness of the exterior of the house and its staircases and hallways. The room was thickly carpeted, three of its walls lined with books midway to the ceiling, with rare paintings and prints. A dim light filled the space above the bookcases, while the remaining side of the room was broken with windows which overlooked the street. They would have sufficed to light the room efficiently were it not for the heavy curtains through which the sun's rays were scantily filtered into a somewhat dusty atmosphere.

"I had ample time and opportunity to observe all this, and to take note of the many pieces of fine furniture that adorned the room, for thus far no one had appeared.

"While I was wondering whether this room connected with any other, a section of the wall, books and all, swung back and an old but vigorous-looking, white-whiskered gentleman, wearing a black skull cap, entered the room.

"'Good-morning, sir,' he said as he advanced slowly toward me, with hand extended. 'Good-morning. So you are my new secretary?'

"This was rather an unexpected turn of affairs. Should I explain that in San Francisco I was considered rather a wealthy young man, with brilliant prospects as the junior member of the firm of Crane & Company, shipbuilders, and therefore in no present need of a secretaryship? Of course that would end the matter right there. But why not follow up the adventure a bit further? I had a long, well-earned vacation before me, and the hand of Romance beckoned. Romance in being secretary to an old fossil? But the advertisement had read that I would learn of something to my advantage, and here I was being greeted as this queer old customer's new secretary, as if negotiations to that end had already been made. There seemed to be a hiatus somewhere. Things didn't connect at all. Perhaps, after all, I was the victim of some foolish error. Maybe I wasn't the only young chap selling those knife-sharpeners on the Avenue yesterday. Sometimes these street fakirs work in gangs.

"I was about to request some light on the muddled matter when I became conscious that some one else had entered the apartment. I glanced around quickly and met the eyes of the beautiful girl in the automobile, who had been the indirect cause of my recent abandonment of the career of a street merchant.

"She gave me a quick, meaning look that conveyed the information that whatever the game was it was my cue to play it, and indeed I was not loath to play it with so fair a spectator.

"So, to the old gentleman, who had been patiently awaiting my response, I replied without further hesitation:

"'Yes, sir, I am Leslie Crane, and shall be happy to serve you in any way I can.'

"'And I,' he returned courteously, 'am Professor Esenwein, and this young lady is my present secretary, Miss Elizabeth Twining, to whom I must refer you for any particulars you may desire as to your new duties.'

"And with a formal bow the professor retired behind his fortification of books, leaving me alone with the fair Elizabeth.

"'Well,' she said, 'I suppose you are wondering what it is all about. After all, it is very simple. I noticed you on the street yesterday. It was plain that you needed employment, and it was equally plain that you are too intelligent to waste your time peddling trash at the street curb. This all occurred to me some time after I saw you, so I had no means of relocating

you. Hence the advertisement, to which I am glad to see you made immediate response.'

"'Yes,' I said. The simple directness of this very beautiful young business woman both amazed and charmed me.

"'But,' I added, 'may I inquire what is to be the nature of my duties. And also, if you are this gentleman's secretary, why he greeted me just now as his new secretary?'

"'Very simple again,' she replied with a smile. 'It will be necessary for me to give up this position soon, and Professor Esenwein has asked me to pick and train my successor.'

"'And I am "it"?' I asked blankly.

"'Yes,' she assented gayly. 'And now, suppose I give you a few instructions.'

"Well, it seemed, as obvious when I entered the apartment, that the professor was a bookworm. He was, in fact, a sort of glorified second-hand book dealer. Old copies and rare editions were his prey, and he tracked them down and furnished them on demand, and for a valuable consideration, to the literati in all parts of the country.

"Like most bookish chaps, the old professor was a bit queer. As one instance of this queerness Miss Twining informed me that although he evidently had a vast store of ancient tomes in addition to those visible in the room in which he had received me, she was never permitted to pass the mysterious door through which I had lately seen him enter and depart.

"From her statement of the duties attached to the position, it was rather in the nature of a sinecure, at least so far as the secretaryship was concerned, although the pay, which did not particularly interest me, was good enough. The old gentleman, it seemed, received and answered all correspondence himself. Miss Twining, who had the use of the small closed car I had seen the day before, was really a sort of superior messenger. The professor, like many of his ilk, had an aversion to appearing in public, and she did the outside business, including such tasks as taking packages of books to the express office, cashing checks, doing occasional shopping, staving off curious visitors, and attending to various other small business dealings with the outside world. The professor never went out, except sometimes at night, and his frugal meals were sent up from a shabby little restaurant on the ground floor.

"Surely, it didn't look very promising, but I determined to stick for a week or two anyway—certainly as long as Miss Twining remained; for this young lady somehow began to seem like an old friend from whom I would not willingly be parted.

"Things ran along very smoothly for a few days. I needed no instructions to run the car, which was of a popular make, and I was soon doing business with the express office and other places. The professor I saw but seldom. His care for his precious volumes impelled him to prepare them for shipment himself, and very creditable looking packages he made of them. Of Miss Twining, or Elizabeth as I wanted to call her, but didn't quite dare as yet, I saw a great deal, and every moment she charmed me more.

"About a week after my arrival she announced that I was now letter-perfect in my new duties, and that the next day she would leave. I made a mental note that the professor would surely find himself under the necessity of finding another secretary shortly, for it would be no fun to stay on without Elizabeh. Certainly any bright high-school lad could fill my place, and I felt little compunction in planning my early departure. It was evident that Elizabeth had accentuated the importance of the job for my sake, and that she regarded me as an impecunious but promising young man who needed a temporary lift. It was plain enough that she was only turning the job over to me because she thought I needed it more than she did herself. I ascertained that the professor had known nothing about the advertisement to which I responded, but that Elizabeth simply told him that she had a likely young man in mind to take her place, and that he had agreed to the arrangement.

"That morning I had an unusually bulky package of books for the express office. On the way I noticed that the twine had slipped from one side of the package, and

I stopped the machine on a side street in order to retie it. It was addressed to Mr. Bill Skaggs in some Western city. Now that the package was half undone, it occurred to me to see in just what sort of literature the erudite Mr. Skaggs was interested. After all, the parcel only contained books, and it did not occur to me that I would be violating any confidence by examining them.

"In a moment the package was unfastened, and I tumbled out a motley assortment of volumes on the seat beside me.

"Certainly Mr. Skaggs was somewhat of a connoisseur. The collection of rare editions which I was to ship him by prepaid express consisted of a mail-order catalogue for the year of our Lord 1918, a city directory of ancient vintage, an old volume of sermons, and a couple of discarded Congressional directories. Truly a catholic taste had our Western book buyer.

"Of course it was easy enough to figure out that as a result of poring over musty old books for many years, the poor old professor had gone mildly crazy, and that he now imagined that the worthless old volumes he gathered from junk piles were actually priceless. After all, it was a bit pitiful.

"Yet what about the volumes that lined the walls of the only room of the apartment to which I had been admitted? To be sure, I had never looked at them very closely, but they seemed to be venerable enough. And then, too, would Skaggs and other consignees receive such worthless junk, and actually remit to the professor good substantial sums of money in return?

"It didn't look reasonable on the face of it. However, the answer might be that this was the professor's first offense. Perhaps he had but recently gone daft, and prior book shipments may have been all right.

"As I puzzled over the matter, the big catalog slipped to the floor of the car. I picked it up, and a sealed oblong package tumbled mysteriously from somewhere. The mystery of this seemingly occult manifestation as instantly solved when, upon examining the book, I found a cavity in its interior into which the oblong package had been cunningly fitted. A brief investigation of the remaining volumes disclosed similar treatment, and from each of them I removed packages varying in bulk.

"A horrid suspicion seized me. Having gone thus far, I might as well go further. To break the seals of the largest package was the work of a moment. Tearing the wrappings off, I gazed upon a thick bundle of crisp twenty-dollar bills.

"Needless to undo the others. Counterfeit, of course. My first feeling of surprise and indignation was followed by a sensation of disappointment and sorrow. Elizabeth was doubtless in the game, and for some reason they wanted me in also.

"But the bills looked genuine. Was it possible that, after all, this was but an erratic method of transmitting a large sum of real money?

"I knew the professor must have large sums on hand, for I had recently cashed a number of money-orders for him, and he never sent any money to the bank for deposit.

"It would take but a minute or so to find out. A branch bank was near by, and a few minutes later I was handing a crisp yellowback to the paying-teller and asking for change.

"Without apparent hesitation he handed me four fives, and with an air of relief I hurried back to the car in which I had carelessly left the rest of the money.

"When I reached the curb, car and money had vanished.

"Well, I certainly had made a mess of things. The professor had a right to ship his money any way he wanted to, and I, like a blundering fool, had been the means of his losing goodness knows how much cold cash and the car in addition.

"I could procure funds enough from home to make it all good, but—and here was the real rub—how could I explain the matter to Elizabeth without making myself appear a rogue and a fool?

"Occupied as I was by these bitter thoughts, I had not noticed that I was being followed closely by two men. To test the matter I presently turned a corner. They did likewise. I had instinctively

been walking in the direction of 'The Goldmere,' though I would better have been seeking a police station and reporting my loss, but now I crossed the street and proceeded in the opposite direction.

"The men stuck to my trail. I hailed a passing taxicab. As it drew up to the curb the men closed in on either side of me.

" 'Just the thing,' one of them said. 'We can all ride together.'

" 'I'm afraid I don't understand,' I returned.

" 'Well, Spanish Joe,' the other of the two men retorted, 'it ain't a hard matter to understand, after all. You're pretty clever, but you didn't suppose you could pull that stuff right here in Washington, and get away with it, did you?'

"We soon arrived at a neat little police station, where, in spite of vehement denials on my part, I was booked as Spanish Joe, who it appeared was a notorious counterfeiter. All the banks had been furnished a general description and warned to be on the lookout for me, and the bank teller I had accosted had recognized me as soon as I had asked for change. On account of my bad reputation, however, and wishing to avoid any rumpus in the bank, he had passed out the change for a counterfeit bill and then had quietly given a signal which resulted in my arrest. The detectives seemed surprised when they found no firearms upon me, and expressed the view that I had somehow managed to discard my gun en route. I found that the car and the rest of the bogus money had been brought in by another detective.

"In vain I displayed personal cards, letters and other tokens of my true identity, and pleaded with them to telegraph my father in California.

" 'What's the use, Spanish?' they replied skeptically. 'It's all exceedingly clever of you, but why not come across and show us where the plant is?'

" 'Very well,' I said presently. I knew well enough that I would eventually be able to prove my inocence. 'Very well, but upon one condition: A young lady we shall probably find there goes free.'

"I had no sooner spoken than the door of the little room in which I was being grilled opened, and the very young lady I had in mind walked in, accompanied by a police inspector.

"So she, too, was in the clutches of the law, and I feared she would not escape as readily as I hoped to do.

"But presently I heard her escort speaking:

" 'I don't think it will be necessary to detain Mr. Crane any longer just now,' said he, 'although we may need him as a witness a little later.'

"The girl nodded.

" 'I am afraid,' he continued, 'that inadvertently we have mixed things up a bit. This young lady, who is in the employ of the United States Secret Service, tells me that Mr. Crane, although he has been aiding her, has thus far been working in the dark.'

" 'And what about Spanish Joe?' inquired one of my inquisitors, glancing at me.

" 'Oh, I'll admit that Mr. Crane does look enough like Spanish Joe to be his brother, for Spanish, minus his make-up, is handsome enough,' returned the police inspector, 'but it won't need an examination of the records at Headquarters to show you're on the wrong track, because we've got Joe himself down at Headquarters right now, thanks to this young lady.'

"What about the counterfeiting outfit?' said the other detective.

" 'We've got the plates and the whole works,' replied the inspector. 'Professor Esenwein certainly had a dandy outfit and his posing as an old bibliophile was a clever stunt. I understand he bought out a whole second-hand book and curio shop in order to furnish his anteroom appropriately.'

"When our little party presently broke up I had a few questions to ask Elizabeth.

" 'If you knew he was a counterfeiter why didn't you have him arrested long ago?' I inquired, among other things.

" 'Because we wanted to get hold of the plates. They are wonderfully good, and it was dangerous to leave them in existence.'

" 'I see.'

" 'Of course,' she continued, 'I fibbed to you a little. I had been behind that book barrier, but hadn't succeeded in locating the plates and printing outfit until today, when

your arrest compelled quick action. I've been keeping in touch with the banks, and they phoned me right away. So we raided Esenwein's place in force, and finally discovered the plant in the basement. Esenwein was really Spanish Joe in disguise. He reached the plant from the flat above through a dumb-waiter shaft.. The owner of the apartment was in on the whole scheme, for Spanish Joe seems to have had a too trusting disposition. I think he was more than half in love with me,' she added, 'but of course his simulated age tied his tongue.'

"'You must have wondered why I was trying to pass the stuff,' said I.

"'I naturally supposed you had caught on and were trying to do a little detective work of your own,' she returned. 'Anyway, I had studied you enough to know that whatever your motive was, it was not criminal.'

"'Thank you,' said I, 'but there's another thing that bothers me. I can't see why it was all necessary to bring me in on the job. Why not another secret service agent?'

"'A lot of reasons,' she replied. 'I felt the need of having a protecting male around, and yet I wanted to work out the problem myself—to show them at headquarters that a mere girl could be as clever as any man—and—well, perhaps my interest in you wasn't purely professional,' she finished archly.

"That that interest was mutual I think has been well testified to by our ten years of happy married life."

A QUIET THIEF

A WELL-DRESSED, derby-hatted young man entered a cigar store at Columbus Circle and Eighth Avenue, held up Louis Snyder, the clerk, and departed with $750.

Being something of a character analyst, Snyder at first felt assured that the visitor was either an actor or a college professor. But after purchasing a package of cigarettes and just as the cash register had been run open to make change the man calmly produced a pistol and ordered Louis to put up his hands. The clerk thought this a joke and laughed.

"Do you want the tens and fives separated, and would you care for the silver?" asked the clerk, who said he couldn't help being facetious on account of the mild appearance of his visitor.

"Yes, I want the silver. I want everything," the robber said. "And I want it quick."

In an attempt to delay, Snyder dropped a handful of quarters on the floor. Some of them rolled around in front of the counter at the feet of the hold-up man.

"Never mind trying to pick them up," the man cautioned. "I'll get all that come to my side. Leave the rest."

No one came in and Snyder had to hand over the $75 in bills and silver. As the robber started out he said in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone:

"Now, I'm going and if you try to follow you'll get in trouble. I mean business."

Snyder watched him go out the door and put down his hands. The man quickly came back.

"I told you to keep them up," he said. "Now, I don't want to have to warn you again."

Snyder kept them up until two customers came in a few moments later. The robber got everything except a few quarters that remained on the floor.

The Man Who Watched

By ARTHUR LOCKWOOD

ROCKY FORKS, lying among the cedars at the foot of the mountainside, was little more than a hunting camp. There were houses, hastily constructed, and an indicated street. The electric light wires were strung from tree to tree, revealing that the establishment of the village had been a spontaneous enterprise.

It was the season when hoboes infested the country; the harvests were over, the frosts had held up work in the construction camps and a world of medicants were set loose. Crisp November winds was the spur to their sudden activity; they were bound South, East and West, but all were traveling and many stopped in Rocky Forks. It was a division point and every freight train that pulled in dumped its quota of bums onto the hillside, there to wait for an outgoing freight.

One morning, when an engine tugging at a long load puffed up to the plug, a man in a gondola many cars back stuck his head over the side, and his eyes fell on the little town below. Evidently attracted, he climbed down and reconnoitered along the fill.

He was a rough-looking individual, dirty, rusty-skinned, unshaven and with a pair of shifty bloodshot eyes. He was of medium height, thick set, and the long, faded brown overcoat he wore fitted him illy. It was fastened at the throat with a safety-pin. His hands were naked and he jammed them in his pockets as he hunched his head down into the collar of his coat. A mop of black hair scraggling about his neck was covered with a greasy cap. As he looked about, half-apprehensive of some "bull" or "brakey," there was a gleam in his eyes like that of a fright-hunted animal, some fear and some ferocity.

There was no candor nor trustworthiness in those eyes. There was in the expression of his face something that suggested the mad beast ready to snarl and sink his teeth into an enemy.

The rest of the information about this fellow was quite as ragged as his looks. His record should have been written in red ink, for there had been more than one time in his career of crime that he hadn't hesitated to take a human life. Even now he was a fugitive from San Quentin, where he had been serving thirty years following a conviction of murder in the second degree.

He had served three years when he escaped and went up to Seattle in a bootlegging schooner. A "sleeper-jump" inland from Seattle followed and he went to work in a construction camp. Distasteful though the work was, he stuck it out through the summer, principally because it afforded a fine opportunity to "lay low." When the work ended he made for town, had a high old time for three days, and finally woke up in the gutter, his money gone and several scars of battle on his face. A raid on a farmhouse netted him little but an overcoat, and that which was very important in his trade—a gun. The farmer was evidently an ex-service man, for the pistol which had been hanging from the kitchen door was an Army .45 calibre type.

Thus adequately "heeled" he started on an aimless jaunt Eastward, taking short jumps, and spending many a social hour in the camps of "blanket stiffs" along the way. Here and there a hold-up, now and then a burglary, constituted his greatest activity. It was in the second week of this trip that he alighted from the "rattler" at Rocky Forks and ran an appraising eye over the landscape.

This man, a ready weapon bulging from

his overcoat pocket, a peculiarly truculent gleam in his eye, went down into the village with the intention of begging a "hand-out" at a backdoor. This purpose was at least charitable for Luke, the Coremaker.

He walked along the tracks to the station, and then struck off down a roadway that led to the village. Although he had slept well in a box-car partly filled with sand—he had gotten into the gondola to facilitate sightseeing at a previous stop of the train—now he was hungry, and alert for any likely house he might come across.

Hoboes are choosers when it comes to selecting a house to "hit up." There is no telling, but they follow reasonless hunches, and Luke passed three before he essayed a "panhandle." The one he stopped before was inviting enough. It was a new, brightly painted bungalow, and before it was a stretch of broad lawns and leafless shrubbery. A whitewashed board fence surrounded it. A half-dozen enormous cedars gave a park-like effect to the grounds. The lace curtains that festooned the windows gave Luke the idea that here was the abode of refinement and possibly culture. Luke knew that cultivated folk rarely refuse to give a man food. There was the tendency, of course, to question him; intelligent people were curious and eager to hear a tale of woe. He prided himself on the glibness—aye, the extemporaneousness with which he could work up the tearful details.

This looked like a happy home; perhaps he would be met by a young housewife. He decided to tell her the one of how his wife ran away and his little girl died of grief. He was aware of its efficacy; more times than not it elicited a dollar or so from the hearer, and he recalled the grief-rent old maid who once handed him a five-spot for his painstaking fracture of her heart.

He went to the rear door, knocked and, hat in hand, waited. The cold wind on his head sent a shiver through him. He was surprised, but by no means disappointed, when the door opened and a scholarly looking young man smilingly and amiably greeted him.

"Could ye gimme a cup o' coffee, mister?" pleaded Luke in his humblest style.

"Well, well," replied the young man, as he looked the forlorn figure of Luke over, "I certainly can. Come right in. My wife's just stepped out, but I'll fix up something for you."

"Thank yer, sir. God bless yer," said Luke perfervidly, but a malevolent gleam came into his eyes. When they were in the kitchen Luke was appraising his host covertly and ominously.

The young fellow was not a typical Westerner. Luke judged him to be a civil engineer or a technical expert. The precision of his speech, his genial manner, the modern appointments of the kitchen, everything around him indicated the effete East transplanted. The young fellow—he was slightly built and pink skinned—wore a pair of tortoise-rimmed glasses, a Norfolk coat, corduroy pants and high leather shoes.

Luke's appraisal of his surroundings yielded one important fact: The fellow was well off. Across his vest, disclosed by his unbuttoned coat, Luke noted a heavy gold watch chain. On a finger there was a massive gold ring—a sapphire, and a large one. Shrewd Luke knew it was genuine, that this man of taste would wear nothing else. And he knew that such a sapphire was worth close to a thousand dollars.

Through the kitchen door he saw a sparkling sideboard arrayed with silverware. Luke wondered what else there was in the house, how much money, the extent of his wife's jewelry.

The hobo's smile as he watched his host busy at the stove with the preparations of a hasty luncheon was tainted with effort. Those gleaming eyes belied any good nature or any kindliness. Luke felt himself hating this man for his kindness; hated him because he had property, and hated him because he acted like a happy man. There was class hatred, virulent envy and greed in his mind. He had been too long under the rigid discipline of prisons to respond to any good treatment; and everything he did not fear he hated. His fingers itched to fasten themselves around the man's throat, a vicious, ungrateful acquisitiveness surged in him, making him wish to rob for the sheer gratification of depriving the man of his property.

"It's getting to be pretty cold weather for you fellows," said the householder.

"Yes," said Luke; "yes, sir."

"Here now, this coffee will warm you up, and there's some eggs and bacon coming." The smell of them had already conveyed this to Luke.

"Thank yer," muttered Luke; "God bless yer."

The poignant smell of the food assailed Luke's nostrils. He ate and drank in a veritable spasm of hunger. His host's eyes were on him speculatingly as he ate; Luke caught the dread telepathy that the man was apprehensive beneath his ostensible kindness. Luke's eyes narrowed at the thought. He had reason to be suspicious.

Luke had finished the last of his repast, the fourth egg, in fact. He had drank his fill of coffee, and his stomach was luxuriating. He lowered the cup, looked up at the man who had given it to him, and who was asking:

"Want anything more?"

"No," said Luke slowly. There was danger in that moment.

Luke's smile puckered into an acrid scowl, he leaped to his feet, his hand went to his pocket and the automatic gleamed.

"No," Luke repeated, "except you better stick 'em up."

The man was on his feet, mouth agape, hands up in obedience, astonished perplexity riven into his countenance.

Luke reached out unabashed and fumbled for the watch. His mistake was that he thought his man was scared stiff and spiritless. He lowered his gun unconsciously in his eagerness to yank the watch from its moorings. And as he did so those upraised hands descended and knocked the gun away.

They leaped at each other and came to grips. Like a vise that thin hand closed around Luke's wrist and a corduroy knee went into the pit of his stomach with staggering force. A violent pain shot through Luke's abdomen, the hand that held the gun relaxed for a moment, then tightened just in time to save the gun being wrenched from his hand. It was a desperate struggle, and Luke's frenzied yank to free himself from the deadlock succeeded. He had yanked himself free; he dared not shoot, for fear the shot would be heard. He had in an instant clubbed the gun, and with a hiss and a snarl he sprang at his man again. The gun butt came down on the young man's uncovered skull with a dull, crushing crack. Blood spurted from his nose and mouth and he fell forward against Luke, his hands feebly put forward to break the fall. For a second that sagging head slobbered against Luke's coat, then the body sank to the floor at the crook's feet. Luke bent over the quivering form and struck again. There was an instantaneous writhing spasm, a flexing of aimless fingers, a convulsion of the body, then silence.

Luke, now moving with the speed and stealth of a cat, stripped off the ring, the watch and went hastily through the pockets. From a wallet he extracted some bills, took some loose change from a pocket and then ran upstairs. Deftly and skillfully he frisked a bedroom dresser, finding an enameled box half full of gold and jewel-set trinkets. He descended again to the dining-room, hesitated about taking the silverware and decided against it. It was too bulky. He reassured himself that his victim lying with his face in a pool of blood on the kitchen floor had not moved. As he turned to ascend the staircase again he saw through the dining-room window a woman entering the front gate.

He acted quickly. Out of the rear door and keeping the house between himself and the woman, he ran swiftly into the thick boskage behind the house. Covering ground as he did, he was too far away to hear the scream a few minutes later.

The news of the murder of Layton Cole, one of the finest of Rocky Forks' citizens, went through the little community like wildfire. The circumstances of the murder were apparent; the breakfast dishes, the ransacked house satisfied the investigators that it was the work of a hobo. Indeed, all crimes in that town were the work of hoboes and citizen vigilantes were prepared to deal with them summarily.

A posse was formed immediately, and every stranger questioned. Almost the first act was to inform the station agent,

so that no man could leave the town by a freight. This was security enough, for it would be certain death to attempt to leave any other way. There was nothing but a trackless wilderness for leagues, and starvation timber wolves and bobcats were poor assurance of safe conduct through the woods.

Every freight train was stopped and searched three or four times with the cooperation of the train crew, and all the residents of Rocky Forks devoted themselves to the task of finding a head to go into the noose that was already prepared.

Mrs. Cole, who discovered her husband's pulseless body when she returned from shopping, was prostrated.

When Luke had made his way through the woods for some time he paused breathlessly and looked around. In the pocket of that faded brown overcoat reposed the valuables he had stolen—perhaps two thousand dollars' worth. He pulled them out to look at them, and for the first time looked down at the front of his coat. It was covered with a great smear of blood. He was startled when he saw it and confused. His first thought was of the means at hand for cleaning the coat; it was telltale, it was too convincing. He thought of rubbing dirt into the blood, of attempting to wipe it off with leaves, but no such idea recommended itself. He must get rid of the coat. A wise act, anyway, for he might have been seen, and the coat was the most conspicuous thing about him.

He calmly put the jewelry back into the pocket and carefully folded the garment around his gun and buried it under some leaves. The thing to do now was to make for the tracks, jump to the next town and wait until the furore blew over. He was not aware of the panic he had created in Rocky Forks, or the extent to which he was trapped. He carefully marked the spot where the coat was buried before he walked toward the tracks.

Twenty minutes later, when he emerged from the woods and onto the railroad right-of-way, three men seized him and took him to the station.

Their questioning was exhaustive, but cagey Luke answered them all, plausibly, innocently. Where did he come from, where was he going, how long had he been in town, what was he doing in the woods? Luke had a ready answer every time.

The crook was conscious, however, that one of the men, a young fellow addressed by the others as Detective Morton, asked less questions, but looked at him steadily with a pair of lead blue eyes.

Luke met them with his own once or twice and the effect was to make him shiver. There was something in them that destroyed his confidence in himself, something that seemed to peer beyond the innocent, unruffled exterior he showed to the others. The tramp feared the man who watched him so intently.

When they had exhausted their questions he was released. As he walked out of the station he glanced back to see Morton looking after him, a new and startling glint replacing the dull leaden gloss in his eyes. Luke didn't need to be told that Morton had something up his sleeve.

Night fell. The hillside was dotted with fires where a day's accumulation of hoboes encamped until the ban on their departure was lifted. Around each fire little groups of mendicants talked, smoked, made mulligan stew or attempted to sleep. Only the vigilance committee was active, and its numbers having been augmented the arrest and questioning or espionage upon all the tramps continued. Some of them stalked from fire to fire, scrutinizing the faces illumined by the glow, others walked about in the darkness with rifles on their shoulders like sentinels.

Luke was cold. Even before the fire the chill night air smote his thinly clad back, making his discomfort acute. He hated discomfort. Now and again it would even make him forget those eyes of Morton, which had stuck in his mind like twin phantoms. Luke now thought out a plan. It was dangerous to stay in Rocky Forks—he didn't know why, didn't need to know after reading the significance of Morton's eyes. The only positive knowledge he needed was the instinctive intelligence that by whatever means, and at all costs, the sooner he went away the better.

There had been some hobo talk of a special train that was coming through that night, a discussion of its merits as a train to "ride," but to Luke it was a gloomy prospect.

Across the fire from him sat a fellow, no more than a boy, judging from his smooth face and youthful looks. He wore a huge mackinaw coat, and seemed to take a delight in the fire and the hobos' conversation.

"I asked the station agent today," he said, "and he told me a Special is comin' through a little after midnight, but I guess she's a bad one for us. Carryin' some directors or somethin', and the bulls that ride her shoot first and talk about it afterwards."

"Ye're blasted right," said another; "no takin' chances on her fer me."

Luke eyed the boy narrowly. The mackinaw coat he wore was essential to Luke's immediate comfort and essential to his plan. He couldn't get out on the Special without a warm coat, and he had planned to catch that train to make his getaway.

"Hey, kid," he said, "wot'll ye take fer that Benny?"

The lad looked up at him in perplexity and shrugged his shoulders.

"Guess I don't wanta sell it," he said.

"Don't wanta sell it. Why, yer damn fool, I'll give yer twenty bucks fer it."

The kid was wise. To accept the offer would be to take the coat off in order to show it. Once it was off there was more than a fifty-fifty chance he would never put it on again. An ancient hobo trick.

"No, I guess I'll keep it," he said.

"Why?" snorted Luke, and he gave the boy a ruthless insult. The kid looked up, stiffened under the curses, but checked himself. Again he saw the motive. If he took off the coat to fight Luke would get it.

The crook now appeared to be angered over something, what no one know. He got up, walked around to the kid and seized him by the collar.

"Git up, yer dog, and fight like a man," he snarled.

A voice behind him interrupted.

"Just a moment there," came the stern tones. "Leave that lad alone. Go on about your business." The voice was Morton's! He came into the firelight, and Luke slunk back to his place.

"I was only jokin'," he said sheepishly, and he attempted to laugh it off.

"Well, don't joke any more."

Luke was afraid of Morton, as he was afraid of most men when on an equal footing. He sat silently.

Peace was again restored around the fire.

There were several yawnings, and finally all slept but the Kid, and Luke, who remained in a sitting posture. The Kid withdrew from the fire. Luke looked after him, but was unable to see where he went. The crook was no longer interested, he had other concerns now. Somewhere from out of the darkness around him he felt he was being watched by Morton. He was fearful. There might be some clue he had overlooked, some evidence he had failed to hide, and Morton was building up a case against him. At any moment he might find himself arrested, and confronted with evidence that would swing him from one of those very cedars under which he was sitting.

He wanted to leave the fire and get out of sight, but such a move would be suspicious. To get that Special out was his plan, but he wanted to take his coat, gun and the jewelry with him. The rascal's curiosity to know where Morton was, and test his hunch that he was being watched, prompted him to deliberately get up and walk back six or eight rods from the fire. His eyes slowly grew used to the gloom, and he began stealthily to reconnoiter in an effort to locate Morton.

Moving soundlessly, he skirted the woods, keeping an especially sharp lookout in the direction from which Morton had appeared. There was perhaps an hour of this walk out into the periphery of light around the fire when suddenly he saw a figure close enough so he could make out the tall proportions of Morton. He walked leisurely, glanced toward the fire, stopped. Then he went near to it, looked around it, and noted the space where Luke had been. With a puzzled expression, he walked rapidly away into the darkness.

Luke felt something like elation. He had

gotten away unseen, for obviously Morton had just discovered that he was missing when he went up to the fire. A search for him might begin any minute. Now was his chance, and it was a good one, to get the hidden coat and catch the Special.

He made slow progress through those woods, and it was perhaps another hour before he found the tall beech tree that marked the spot where he had hidden the stolen stuff. After carefully reassuring himself that he was not followed, he put on the coat and pocketed the gun. The crook had a feeling of relief that he was not now defenseless. The rest would be easy. He could go to the tracks, hide in the bushes until the Special pulled out, then run forward and catch the blind. This was not safe, to be sure, but better than to remain under the surveillance of Morton. He knew that the bugaboo hoboes entertained about the Special applied only to the *practice* of riding it. That was because it was frisked by bulls at every division point or so. But he was sure he could ride it to the next stop with impunity. If a bull was aboard it he would be sleeping in the coach at that hour, and wouldn't suspect that any one would board it at Rocky Forks. But then if he did, well, he who shot first was safest. Hoboes kept off it largely from convention rather than actual danger, and so there was a laxity in the guard it carried. Luke knew that.

Of course it wouldn't be stopped and searched as the freight trains were, for the reason that it only carried railroad officials.

He made his way to the edge of the fill, and there, crouched in the shubbery, he waited.

The movements of the lad with the mackinaw after he left the fireside were those of a frightened youngster. Not yet hardened to hobo life, the brush with Luke had made him decide that that country was not healthy for him. He was afraid to sleep by the fire, so he decided to make the Special. Something about Luke had made him panicky with fright.

The locomotive puffed up to the plug. Vacillating between fear of being seen, and the greater fear of remaining in Rocky Forks, the Kid waited. Around the station were several armed watchers. One of them had taken a cursory look at the blind, and walked back to the shanty. Having taken water, the monster locomotive voiced an air-rending snort, the driving-rod slowly set up its long stroke and the train started.

The Kid ran out, caught the tender and agilely swung up into the blind. He had been quick, but not quite quick enough. Morton, standing on the station platform, was watching. As he saw that dim figure hang for a moment on the tender step, he raised his rifle to his shoulder. Before he could drew a bead the figure disappeared behind the black silhouette of the car.

His next step was performed quickly. Dropping his rifle, he jumped out, seized the hand-rail of the last car and pulled himself off the ground, clinging to the railing around the observation platform.

Luke, the Coremaker, had played a safer game than the Kid. He had selected an ambush farther up the track. When the engine passed it would have gathered greater speed, and even if he was seen from the station he would be whirled swiftly away.

His nice estimate of distance had been somewhat overdone. The train had gathered so much speed that it was all he dared attempt. But long practice gave him self-confidence and he caught the tender and was hanging on the step when the Kid looked down, recognized that greasy cap, and caught one terrified glimpse of those malevolent eyes.

If the Kid had had any doubts about Luke's evil purpose they were now dispelled. In desperation he fancied that he had been followed, and the hobo devil had even caught the train to get him. It was a critical moment, in which there was but one thing to do, fight to his utmost. And here was an instant in which he had an advantage. Luke needed both hands to hang on the hand rail.

The Kid, as scared as a cornered rat, aimed one murderous kick at Luke's head. He had a good purchase, and his heavy boot landed squarely under the crook's chin. Luke's hand relaxed. He was literally lift-

ed into the air and did a back dive into the soft gravel of the embankment.

Detective Morton, hanging to the railing of the rear observation platform, was having difficulty in climbing over the fence-like arrangement. He had finally negotiated it to the point where he swung one leg over when he looked ahead and saw a figure hanging on the tender. And as he looked he saw the figure fly through the air.

Morton came to the conclusion that the fugitive had seen him get aboard, and that he was jumping off again to elude pursuit.

As the rear end of the train drew up to the spot where Luke fell Morton poised himself and leaped. He landed almost on top of the crook, who was scrambling to his feet.

They came to grips like a pair of gladiators, but the struggle was short-lived. The detective, the bigger and heavier, fastened his fingers on Luke's throat. The criminal's mouth opened and his tongue hung out, but his hand made an instinctive move to his overcoat pocket and closed around the butt of that automatic. As he drew it out, Morton saw and wrenched it from his hand. He clubbed it and struck the vicious yegg.

Luke went down, unconscious.

Morton lifted him bodily and carried him back to the station. There they stretched him out and searched him. The jewelry, the bloody coat and bloody gun all told the tale of his guilt. And his finish was that of all transgressors of the law.

THE MONEY-ORDER GANG

A SCHEME by which the Western Union Telegraph Company has been defrauded of thousands of dollars by bogus recipients of telegraphed money orders was revealed in the Jefferson Market Court before Magistrate Ryttenberg, incidental to the arraignment of Leo Carlisle of 229 West Eleventh street. He was held in $5,000 bail for examination on the charge of having been one of four men who obtained $2,500 that had been sent by wire to a guest in one of the city's hotels.

The method used by the men, according to the detectives, was that one of the band, an employee of the company, would hold or delay a message transmitting money as long as possible, while he notified his confederates of the particulars. When the message was sent to a hotel, as was frequently the case in this group's operations, one of the band would ask for mail or telegrams addressed to the man named in the order.

When he got the order he would prepare credentials and would then appear at the telegraph office and claim the money. Another man in the same theft for which Carlisle is held was recently sentenced to twenty years in Sing Sing by Judge Mancuso in General Sessions. A third is awaiting trial after being held in $20,000 bail by Judge Collins.

Detectives Cridland and Tiley of the bomb squad, who arrested Carlisle in his home, told Magistrate Ryttenberg that the fourth member of the group, the inside "tip-off" man who gave information regarding the money orders, is still at large. He is believed to be an employee of the Western Union Company.

The detectives say the man in Sing Sing is Abraham Marks, and the man out on bail is Selig, former employee of the Western Union Company, who during his service is alleged to have taken several thousand dollars by the same scheme. He was not placed under arrest until after the robbery.

Beating the Burglar Alarm

By JOE BURKE

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

BENDING low, Bull glided to the room in which the owner slept.

Pulling a heavy bookcase away from the wall, he dropped to his knees and ran his fingers swiftly along the mopboard. He could hardly suppress a cry of delight as he touched what looked like a nail-head, and a portion of the board swung out. Reaching within the hole thus disclosed, Bull Cuddy hauled out a heavy, flat, brass-bound box.

For the third time that night he brought into play the steel instrument he carried under the lid of the box.

He had a ton of power in that leverage and the lock snapped. He raised the lid and gasped.

A fortune in precious stones lay beneath his greedy eyes.

He did not grab them, but stared spellbound.

His brain was level, cool, his movements normal. He had beat the "net." He kept everything about his plan vivid in his mind. He knew his precise position. His getaway would be as silent as his entry. He would leave no clue, no trace, in his wake. From a despised "snoop," he was now a master crook.

Carefully, but hastily, Bull Cuddy transfered the loot from its nestling bed to his pockets. When the last handful of stones were taken, he heaved a sigh and removed a glove from his hand. Although the room was cheerless and chilly, beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. He mopped his face with a handkerchief and stood erect.

Suddenly he stiffened. A sound reached his ears, close at hand, nearly behind him. He spun on his heel. Too late. Old Fritz stood confronting him, his eyes ablaze, a revolver held firmly in his claw-like hand.

"You!" screamed the enraged jeweler, when the gleam from the flashlight which he held in his other hand illuminated Bull's features. "Dis is why you come every night to look at a present for your girl, eh? Bah! What a fool I been. You now come to rob me! You thief, give to me back mein——"

When Bull Cuddy found himself trapped, and recognized as well, he did some quick thinking. He clamped his teeth shut as a vision of the somber, gray walls of a prison loomed up before him, and cursed himself inwardly for his lack of caution. His bare hand gripped the hard, smooth surface of the steel bar in his coat pocket. Like a flash he struck.

The blow landed with a heavy thud on the aged jeweler's head and he uttered a low moan and crashed to the floor.

Bull Cuddy staggered back and stared horror-eyed at the inert mass. The old man's eyes were wide and fixed. A dark stain was gathering beneath his hand. The fatal bar fell from the crook's hand to the floor. It's clanging aroused him, and without stopping to recover the tool he sprang to the trapdoor, descended, and several minutes later he was climbing through his bedroom window.

It was still snowing hard, and before Bull swung his legs to the floor he pulled off his rubbers and cast them far out into the storm. Closing the window, he crossed the room to the door. His drawn, tense fea-

tures relaxed as he perceived that the tissue-paper was still intact on the doorjamb.

Without making a light, Cuddy again resorted to the counterfeit bottom of his trunk. There he hastily deposited his plunder. Then as hastily he disrobed and went to bed.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN alarm clock ringing loudly to the discord of Bull's curses next morning caused him to get out of bed. No thoughts of the crime of the night before had disturbed his repose. Old Boreas had blown himself out, stilling the tempest of the snow king. An ermine waste spread its white mantle everywhere, a few belated stars twinkled in the heavens, and the new day was born.

Bull Cuddy was not dreaming of the wonders of nature. Far from it. He dressed slowly. That necessity attained, he removed the loot, rubber gloves and flashlight from his trunk. Then he gazed about his diminutive abode, searching eagerly for a safe place to hide them. As his glance paused on the only window a thought came to him as he noted that the top sash was nailed to the casing. Bull Cuddy was allotted the usual amount of intelligence that is usually found in his breed, and his mental deduction was that the window had no sash.

His hypothesis was correct, for a screwdriver and a little exertion verified it. Everybody knows that there is a box-like shaft on each side of a window-casing, where iron weights are hung to balance the twin panes. A small portion of wood, its ends cut on the bias, a single screw holding it intact, is the gateway to them.

Into those cavities Bull secreted all his loot. After a hasty look around, to make sure that no evidence of the night before was visible, he left the room, locking it carefully behind him, and hurried downstairs.

As he passed the dingy office Jake looked up from a paper he was reading. For the first time Bull Cuddy felt a pang of apprehension. He fancied that the landlord was reading his very thoughts. He forced himself to smile as he stopped and inquired lightly:

"What's de news, Jake? Everything snowbound?" Then added with assumed zest: "Gee, Jake, but a good sleep is de dope fer a guy. I slept good all night, and believe me, bo, I'm all ter de mustard dis mornin'."

He waited for Jake to respond, but no answer came. Jake resumed his reading.

The first news of the tragedy found its way into Danville Mills at about noon. Alarmed at the aged jeweler's non-appearance, and knowing well his habit of punctuality, a neighboring storekeeper informed the police. They forced the door and discovered the body.

Bull Cuddy's face grew ashen when a fellow-workman read the passage aloud about the finding of the steel bar and the fingerprints thereon. He cursed himself for a fool for leaving it behind. But his sudden alarm just as suddenly subsided, and he even smiled. They, the police, had nothing on him. His fingerprints were not in Headquarters. He had never been "mugged" or fingerprinted by the police of Boston or any other city. Why should he worry? He could say he was in his room all night. There were two persons at least who could swear to that. The only witness against him was Fitz Berger, and he was dead. Bull Cuddy had a fortune in valuable stones. The police found the safe intact and picked up the empty box. The stolen contents were unknown to them, as the murdered jeweler kept no record of the gems. He had his reason. They were stolen goods. Cuddy figured that he would work right along till the hue and cry was over. Then it would be the bobbed-haired ticket-seller and himself for South America.

CHAPTER SIX

RED MANNING, seated in the back room of Peg-leg Bowler's Tap, stared frowningly at the flaring type. A

copy of the afternoon *Record* was lying on the table before him, and he was reading the graphic narrative of the robbery and murder.

"Bull Cuddy do it? Not in a million years," he mused, "but yer can never tell. Dat big sap couldn't swipe milk from a kitten. Some bird from up-State blew in and got wise to de lay. Dammit, if I thought dat——"

He flung the paper aside and strode from the room.

When Cuddy swung around the corner of the block on which the lodging-house he called home was located, Red Manning stepped from a doorway and blocked his path. Bull did not recoil nor claw for a gat, as he did not pack a gun. Bull was wise in many ways.

"Hello, Red," he greeted, drawing in his digit when the cracksman ignored it. "I'll see youse at Peg-leg's tonight. I gotta date."

"You'll see me now," snarled Red Manning. "Duck in dis doorway, or——"

Bull Cuddy's eyes dropped. The big yegg's right hand was in his coat pocket. A protuberance there bespoke a concealed revolver.

"What's de big idea?" inquired Bull. They were standing in the shadow of the doorway indicated by the cracksman. "I ain't got nothin' to sell youse yet."

"Naw," Red hissed, "youse ain't got nothin' to sell, eh! Yer double-crossed me and croaked de jeweler. You're a bum crook, you are. Come across fifty-fifty, or I'll stool a certain dick that'll be tickled pink ter find ol' Fritz's killer."

Bull Cuddy was a coward. There is no denying that, as nearly all crooks are. But when Greek meets Greek it is different. Bull knew that Red was trying to throw a scare into him. The accusation was a bluff. He knew that the gun into the big crook's hand was harmless—that is, as far as Red pulling the trigger was concerned. Red was a wise bird, and was not taking pot-shots on guess dope. Not him. Bull laughed outright.

"Pull in your ears, Red," he mocked, "it's rainin'. Tryin' ter pass de buck ter me? Dat's rich. Why, you poor sap," he added scornfully, "I've got witnesses dat knows dat I never left my room last night. Youse pulled de job yourself, an' are scared stiff. Beat it before de bulls gets wise ter ya, 'cause I heard dat Sheeran is on de job."

Bull Cuddy had called his bluff. Red reluctantly conceded. With a snarling warning, "I'll get you fer dis, if yer double-crossed me," he hurried away, the reverberation of Cuddy's laugh pursuing him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHEN Bull Cuddy apprised Red Manning that Detective Sheeran was on the job he was speaking the truth—although unknowingly. Without a tangible clue of any kind to work on, only the blood-stained steel bar with the fingerprints on it, duplicates of which could be found at Headquarters, the relentless man-hunter started out to apprehend the killer of the aged jeweler.

The general sentiment at Headquarters was that some up-State crook had committed the crime. Detective Sheeran did not share their opinion. The hole in the wall between the two buildings was one of the clues he studied hardest. That was the only way to beat the "net," he figured. To form such a plan the plotter had to be familiar with the neighborhood. A stranger hanging around would be an object of suspicion, and likely to fall under the watchful eyes of the police. Hence a local crook must be the guilty party.

Another deduction of Sheeran's was that the murderer was not a regular cracksman, for, if he were, he would have blown the safe. There was no attempt to do the latter, the murderer centering his sole attention on the hidden recess behind the baseboard. One thing was evident, that whoever committed the crime had made frequent visits to the store and knew that the place was wired against intrusion. The crook must have known that the jeweler was a "fence," and discovered the hiding

place of Berger's valuables during a call at the store.

Next day the detective found himself before the squalid hotel in which Bull Cuddy made his home. A timid, feminine salutation arrested his steps. At an open window on the first floor stood Emily Shine. Her thin face was flushed. She admired the young sleuth in secret, ever since the day he made an official visit there to take into custody two San Francisco crooks. He spoke to her kindly, and when one of the pair of crooks tried to attack Emily, accusing her of informing on them, Sheeran caught her in his strong arms. patted her cheek and assured her there was no need of alarm.

"Hello, Miss Shine," returned the detective, looking up at the girl. "Any newcomers lately?"

"No, Mr. Sheeran," she replied, her lonesome heart beating a tattoo against her ribs. "They're all pretty near the same as when you were here last."

The detective reflected for a moment.

"Somebody bumped off old Berger night before last. Did ya hear about it?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Sheeran. I read it in old Jake's paper. You didn't get him yet—I mean the one who did it?"

"No, Miss Shine," said Sheeran, warming up to the lonesome girl. "Whoever it was left only the weapon with which the deed was done and fingerprints of which Headquarters have no record. We have on excellent photograph of the prints, and the slayer would be easy to find if we had his. But murder will out, Miss Shine," he finished philosophically, lifting his hat and turning to go; "we'll get him yet. We always do. Good-day."

The poor girl was thrilled when the man from Headquarters took his leave. If she only could help him. She realized that her admiration for him was a forlorn hope, and she shuddered with aversion when her thoughts strayed back to her affair with Bull Cuddy. She was not of a vindictive nature—not Emily Shine—but deep down, rooted in her heart, was a smoldering flame of revenge for the affront to which she had been subjected by Cuddy.

Emily was puttering about the hall on which Bull's room was located when he came home. He grinned broadly at her, and laid a ham-like hand on her narrow shoulder.

"Em, old gal," he sneered, "I'm gonna get youse a swell job in de country. Straight goods, Em. Nothin' to do but stand out in de nice green fields next summer and wear swell rags. Youse'll be just de skirt fer de job, an' you'll sure make a hit."

The girl was all attention. Anything to escape the drudgery which she then had to endure. For a fleeting moment her hatred of him was entirely forgotten. The poor soul desired to live like other girls.

"You mean that, Ned?" she cried eagerly. "That's so good of you. I'm glad I can get away from this rotten house and have good clothes to wear. When can I go, Ned, and what kind of work is it?"

Bull was now standing in the open doorway of his room. The grin on his florid face broadened. When he replied, his words seared the hopeful girl's heart like a branding-iron.

"You can go next July," he mocked, backing inside and pushing the door to until it stood slightly ajar, "an' de job is in a cornfield. All you've got to do is stand there an' scare de crows away."

This insult was the last straw. Emily Shine, stunned, her face like chalk, staggered blindly down the stairs.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AFTER Red Manning's ignominious retreat in the battle of wits with Bull Cuddy he retired to his hang-out in Peg-Leg Bowler's Tap. That Bull was the victor he did not care to admit. And "snoops" like Cuddy were scarce. The police had yet to land him, and that was a big item in his game. A "snoop" once caged is branded. Red still retained the century note that he had offered to Bull. There was another lay that was a "net," and Red's hundred-dollar bill was burning to change hands for the information that

would beat the burglar alarm. The following evening found Red ringing the doorbell at Jake's lodging-house.

The door opened and a girl appeared.

"I wanna see Edward Cuddy," requested the fiery-thatched yegg.

Emily Shine, her pale cheeks smeared with dried tears, was looking inquiringly at him.

"Tell him it's a guy from de mill."

At the mention of Cuddy's name rebellion entered her very soul. Her eyes flashing, she stood aside.

"To the devil with you and Ned Cuddy," she fairly screamed, pointing a finger upstairs. "He's in Room 7. Go tell him yourself; I ain't his servant."

Her smoldering eyes followed the big crook as he lumbered up the stairs. Her trust in human nature had been rudely shattered. She was honest herself and she was averse to thinking ill of others.

But there was something vaguely familiar about Bill Cuddy's visitor that gripped her attention. She mistrusted him, and made up her mind to watch the crook.

Hardly had the door of Room 7 closed behind Red Manning when she sprang lightly up the stairs and stood motionless before the door.

"What the devil did ya come here fer?" was Bull Cuddy's unwelcome greeting, as he saw who his caller was, and Emily Shine's heart thumped wildly as she heard him go on. "I wanna tell youse right now dat I'm off de crooked game fer keeps. You tried ter pass de buck ter me t'other night when you thought dat I pulled——"

A loud peal of the door bell drowned the rest of the rebuke, and Emily tiptoed away and hurried to respond.

She grew red and white by turns when she threw open the door, for Detective Frank Sheeran stood smiling before her.

"Let me step inside," he requested in a whisper.

Inside, the door closed, his huge form towered over her.

"Miss Shine," he began, amused at her confusion, "where did that big red-headed chap go who came in here a few minutes ago?"

"Up to Ned Cuddy's room," she told him eagerly.

The detective's eyes grew thoughtful and his smile vanished.

He placed his finger to his mouth and narrowed his eyes knowingly. She nodded, denoting that she was "on."

"So everybody in the house is insured," he bellowed in a loud, hoarse tone. "Then I can't do any business here. Goodnight."

He slammed the door and tramped heavily down the front steps. Two minutes later he was standing in listening attitude outside Room 7.

After five minutes or more, unimportant talk being all he heard, Detective Sheeran abandoned his post when the scraping of chairs within warned him of the visitor's intention to leave. He was nowhere in sight when the door was pulled open, and smiled grimly as the two crooks shook hands.

"I's glad youse got somethin' better, Jack," was Cuddy's farewell to the cracksman. "Drop me a line now an' then."

In the hall below the detective again encountered Emily Shine and, as Jake, the landlord, was dozing in the office, he called the girl aside.

"Do you want to help me, Emily?" His hand was resting on her lean shoulder, and he could feel her body tremble at the question.

He had called her Emily! Would she help him? At that moment she would have gladly done anything for him.

"Yes." Her whole heart was in that single word.

"Then listen."

He then told her who Bull Cuddy's caller was, and what trade he followed. He also informed her that the only tools that Red Manning was used to working with were a drill and jimmy.

"Now you said you overheard Cuddy voice such lingo as 'off de game,' 'pass de buck' and so forth? Well, what I want you to do is this: Get Cuddy's fingerprints. Don't let him get wise. Make him think you're not sore. This is Christmas season. Impress the 'good will' stuff on him."

And then he carefully explained the best

method of getting Bull's fingerprints and the after care of them, then added with final pressure:

"There's a little matter of a thousand dollars' reward for the one who lands the bird who croaked Berger. I ain't saying Cuddy did it, but any one who hobnobs with Red Manning—well, he's no saint. I'll be around in a few nights, Emily; and don't forget that the reward *don't* go to me. Good-night."

Two nights later Cuddy sat in his cheerless room, his beetle-brow as black as the night without. He was worried, Bull Cuddy was, worried even with a fortune in his grasp—not from the prick of conscience, but from a desire to sell his stolen loot. He fretted and cursed under the discipline of respectability. He was not at all elated by the fawning manner of the big cracksman, Red Manning. He feared him more than he did the police. He fancied that deep down in the heart of the red-headed crook there was a feeling of animosity, and it gave him a feeling of being double-crossed. Red loomed up on the horizon as a greater menace than the police, for it had been whispered in the underworld that the big yegg was very often suspected of "stooling" when bent on revenge.

Bull sprang erect and paced the floor. He started at every sound. When a door slammed anywhere in the house he voiced his nervousness with snarling oaths. Presently he stopped and raised the window, then he dimmed the single gas-jet. A small screwdriver turned out the screw which held in place the portal of his improvised gem vault. Carefully he withdrew the loot.

"You beauties," he ruminated, fondling the costly stones almost reverentially. "You're mine! Mine! Mine!"

His hands shook as he tied them up in two soiled handkerchiefs and returned them to the hiding place, after which he closed the window and threw himself on the bed fully clothed. Five minutes later there came a timid knock on the door.

Startled at first, he sat up. When he recovered his tranquillity Bull Cuddy arose and turned up the light. That done, he eased himself into a chair beneath it and picked up the evening paper. Then he growled:

"Come in."

The knob turned slowly and the door was pushed open gingerly. Emily Shine stood framed in the doorway. Bull suppressed an oath which sprang to his lips. She was only a fool girl who was infatuated with him, his egotism determined, so why waste time on her. But he smiled a greeting and laid down his paper and bid her enter.

"Hello, Em," he saluted with dissimulated graciousness. "What's on your mind? C'mon in."

The girl sidled into the room servilely, closing the door and standing with her back to it.

"You ain't mad on me, Ned? Are you?" she asked.

Her voice was low and subdued, her manner was cringing. But her eyes belied her attitude. They fairly blazed with fires of hate.

"Surest ting you know, I ain't sore on yer," he assured her, with a painful effort to smile. "Sit down. What's on yer mind?"

Emily Shine listened intently for an instant, then, apparently satisfied with the silence from without, she ventured to whisper:

"Jake's made some pretty good hooch. It's cold an' lonesome for you an' me that's got no home of our own this Christmas eve, so I thought you might like a sociable drink. Jake's sleepin' off a skinful now, and if you say the word I'll bring you up a couple of drinks in a bottle."

Bull Cuddy was standing erect and beaming. A few shots of moonshine was just what he was in need of. He could get all he could pay for at Peg-Leg's, but Red Manning hung out there, and he was one man he did not care to meet.

"Go to it, old girl," he ordered with much gusto. "Bring it along. You ain't a bad scout, after all. Maybe I'll put you on my visitin' list, after all. Bring de booze an' we'll talk it over."

Trembling all over with aversion, Emily Shine hurried from the room. She did not go to Jake's office either, but to her "hole-

in-the-wall" under the basement stairs. From beneath a washstand—one of the three articles of furniture in the stuffy recess—she brought out a bottle. It was of pint measure, and contained about one-third of amber-colored liquid.

She set it on the bed and polished it briskly until its surface glistened; then carefully, without touching the polished surface with her fingers, she rolled it in paper and hurried upstairs to Bull Cuddy's room again.

"I had to cover it up," she explained. The murderer was moistening his lips and tearing off the covering. "I stole it from Jake today. I thought you'd be cold and like a hooker."

Bull grasped the bottle in his powerful hand and poured a huge drink into a water glass. He swallowed it. Another followed, then another. The bottle was now empty. He cursed at the discovery.

"Why in thunder didn't you bring enough while yer were at it?" he growled, throwing the empty bottle to the floor. "Get outta here, yer bum. Beat it, or I'll——"

Emily Shine stooped and seized the bottle off the rug on which it lay. Holding it by the neck, she rushed from the room.

A loud guffaw followed the girl. As she hurried downstairs her shoulders heaved and tears ran in rivulets down her flushed cheeks. Not sobs and tears of humiliation. Far from it. Emily Shine was never so happy in all her cheerless life.

CHAPTER NINE

BULL CUDDY was in an ugly mood the following morning from a combination of nerves and moonshine.

Emily Shine was about the house as usual. She even hummed a tune which she had heard at the movies, where her hated rival presided in the box-office. She was walking on air, for that morning, at the back door, she had placed in the hands of her new idol, Detective Frank Sheeran, the empty bottle covered with the fingerprints of Bull Cuddy.

"I might have something to tell you when you call again," she told him, "even if this old rum bottle does no good. I won't tell you now because I'm not sure of what I've got in mind. And God knows"—her thin face grew soft—"as much as I hate Bull, if he's done no wrong, I don't want to hurt him."

After all the other lodgers left the hotel, Emily unlocked and entered Room 7. Inside, she hurried to the window. There she repeated the performance enacted by Bull Cuddy the night before. She had come prepared for it with a screwdriver, for had she not seen the murderer gloating over the stolen gems, when her eye was glued to the keyhole.

She backed to the bed and sunk to its soft surface, whence she gazed, fascinated by the beauty of the precious stones. As she raised a handful so that the sunlight fell upon them they became a mass of sparkling glory. The girl was enchanted.

So engrossed was she is her visionary fairyland that she did not hear the doorknob turn. Slowly at first, then inch by inch it was stealthily pushed in. With a wolfish snarl, Bull Cuddy sprang inside and slammed the door shut.

CHAPTER TEN

AN hour after Bull had reached the mill the boss saw him acting in a peculiar manner.

"What's the matter, Cuddy?" questioned the foreman. He strode up to the sulking murderer and touched him on the shoulder. "You don't seem inclined to work this morning. Are you sick?"

Bull looked up with a scowl. He hated the foreman. He hated the shop.

"Yes, I'm sick. Sick of dis job. Sick of you. Sick of de whole d—— works. I'm done."

He had got his time and hurried toward the hotel. He figured that he would pack a grip with the loot and a few clothes, leave his trunk, and with the bob-haired ticket-seller they would quit the "Hub."

But his project received a jolt when he opened the door of his room at the hotel.

"So," he hissed, his eyes contracted to pin-points, his distorted face working convulsively. "Spyin' on me, eh? Sore 'cause I gives you de razz, and gonna get even? Well, yer d—— snake, you've stubbed yer toe. Dat junk's mine, an' neither you nor de cops can't pin anything on me."

The girl shuddered slightly as she fixed her eyes steadily on the murderer's lowering visage.

"You're a liar, Ned Cuddy. You stole these stones. You killed old Fritz Berger to get them. You dirty murderer! Belittling me because I'm honest and decent. You'll pay for this, you——"

With a snarl the latent brute in his nature fully aroused, Bull Cuddy's powerful fingers gripped the girl's delicate throat.

Only once did she scream, then her head fell back, loosely. Upon her slender throat the livid imprints of the murder's brutal fingers were already discoloring her soft flesh. Terror and mute entreaty were now registered in her staring eyes. Her puny struggle against the greater odds was at an end. The murderer's hot, putrid breath no longer scorched her cheeks. She murmured a mental prayer as all about her grew dark. Thunderous roars seemed to sound in her ears. Then, as the world about her began to grow dim, there came a crash. As her hand lifted feebly and her faculties revived, she saw a face—a face that gave her hope.

Detective Frank Sheeran had rushed into the room, followed by two stalwart uniformed policemen. Cuddy flung his sagging victim from him and whirled about. His hand flew beneath the mattress, but never reached the gun sought. A well-timed blow from Sheeran's doubled-up fist sent him crashing to the floor.

Then the detective raised the girl tenderly in his arms. Her eyes fluttered and opened slowly. Her swollen lips moved painfully.

"Did—you—get—Cuddy?" she managed to ask.

"Yes, Emily," answered Sheeran, laying her gently on the bed and brushing back the disheveled hair from her clammy forehead. "You're a wonder, little woman; the fingerprints on the bottle and the marks on the jimmy which crushed out old Berger's life are exactly alike! It's all over but the cheering, little woman; for Cuddy will come clean when we rock him at Headquarters. And as for you," he concluded, watching the color slowly returning to her thin face, "the thousand dollars reward is all yours. It's lucky I got here when I did, or—I'd a lost a good partner. I was coming to arrest him when I heard your scream. Dooley, French and I had to kick in the back door. Jake's laying on the office floor drunk. Come, get up here."

The latter command went to Bill Cuddy, who was showing signs of life. He blinked and glared at the handcuffs which fettered his wrists, then scowled up at the grinning uniformed officers.

"Did Red Manning wise youse guys up?" he growled. "If he did, th' d—— stool, I'll——"

"Thanks for the information, Cuddy," smiled Sheeran, nodding to Dooley and French. "Take him along, boys; I'll go and bring Red in."

The winter passed. It was high noon, and the day was perfect, when Sheeran hove in sight of his sister's vine-covered cottage. A form in white was moving about the garden. She turned at the sound of crunching gravel beneath his feet and gave a shrill cry. He stood rooted and stared. She rushed forward and he met her half-way.

What a transformation! What fairy wand had worked these wonders? Where Nature had left off, the clean, healthy environment in which she had been living, the dressmaker, and last, but not least, her love of a he-man, had transformed Emily Shine. She was wonderful!

"Look me over, Frank," she dimpled, a tinge of pertness conveyed with the challenge. "Bull Cuddy once told me that I'd make a good scarecrow; do you think the same, Frank?"

"Scarecrow?" he roared. "Why, you're an angel, and if you'll become Mrs. Frank Sheeran I'll be the happiest cop on the force."

(*The End.*)

Mail Thieves

By TOM FOX (*Scotland Yard Detective*)

THERE is no department of the Federal Government in which robberies are more frequently attempted than in the Postal Service, yet our mails are guarded by the finest system in the world. The fact that very severe punishment is dealt to transgressors seems to hold no terror for some crooks who covet the vast sums handled in the mails. On account of the huge number of postal employees, it is difficult to check up on each individual's honesty, of course, so every precaution is taken by the chief officials to safeguard the parcels and letters entrusted to their care. The post-office detectives find that if there is only an occasional robbery in a certain department, it is hard to locate the thief. If, however, there is a steady loss covering a notable period, there is a much better chance of finding the guilty party. There is more dishonesty outside the postal employees than there is among them. When complaints of missing mail are investigated it is generally found that the letters containing money are pilfered by employees of the complaining firms. A well-known postmaster once told me of a rather mysterious case. He had been employed in the Brooklyn post-office during his younger days, and there had been a constant stealing of valuable parcels. All their efforts to catch the thief were in vain. The superintendent called him into his office, said the thefts were committed at night after all the employees had gone home, and asked him to secrete himself, and remain on watch. The mail clerk consented. There was only a small wardrobe in the particular room he was to keep under surveillance, and as he was rather large, he had a hard job to squeeze himself inside. Several nights passed without anything occurring. The weather became hot, and the heat in that wardrobe grew insufferable. To relieve himself the watcher stripped off his clothes, put them on the floor of the wardrobe, crouched down, and waited patiently. The clock struck two, and he heard some one turning a key in the hall door. There was a small hole cut in the wardrobe door through which he peeped, and beheld a man entering the room. The superintendent had ordered him not to attack any one unless the intruder purloined one of the mail packages. The young clerk therefore remained quietly watching him. He came across the room and tried the wardrobe door, and the watcher recognized him as the night watchman—a fellow who had been in the employ of the post-office for a number of years. Fortunately the clerk had locked the wardrobe on the inside, or he might have been seen and shot on the pretext that he was a crook. Half naked, his heart beating wildly with excitement, he held his breath and waited anxiously. The watchman did not try to force the door, but walked over to the closet where the registered packages were stored, drew a key from his pocket, unlocked and opened the door, and took out a parcel. Then he relocked the closet and left the room. The clerk hastily dressed and stole after him, but by the time he reached the corridor the watchman had vanished. The embryo detective made a wild dash through the long corridors, startling the engineer by bursting into his room and out again, and finally caught sight of the watchman hiding the stolen parcel in a barrel of waste paper. Next day he would have delivered the trash to a cart in charge of his confederate, and no one would know how the parcel got out of the post-office. With one leap the clerk was on the man, knocked him down, and had him handcuffed before he realized what had

happened. A phone call brought the superintendent and some officers, and the stolen parcel was recovered and the thief locked up. Next day they found a key near a desk where the watchman had been seated, and it proved to be the key of the inner compartment of the big safe where thousands of dollars were kept by the postal authorities. It was evident that the watchman had been carrying the key and had lost it. He confessed afterward that he had found the key three years previously, knew what it was, and kept it, hoping the cashier might neglect to lock the outer door of the safe. Had he done so he would have used the key to plunder the safe. This incident illustrates the dogged perseverence of some crooks with whom postal detectives have to deal. The spectacular hold-ups of mail trains show the daring and impudence of another class of thieves the postal authorities encounter. Of course there are conditions when it is imperative to send cash by mail, but the wholesale use of money orders and checks is the only way to check mail robberies to a great extent.

WHY CROOKS GO WRONG

DAY after day for an aggregate of fourteen years a straggling army of pickpockets, highwaymen, murderers, thugs marched across the threshold of Mr. Swann's vision.

Day after day for fourteen years Mr. Swann successively turned the great legal grindstone next door to the Tombs. Now from the perspective of private life he surveys the crime wave as a retired general might survey with personal interest the wall map of an important battle.

Mr. Swann, who held the District Attorney's office throughout the trying period of the war, agrees in the theory that the criminal is a bad man, rather than a sick man. Yet Mr. Swann goes further. He is not only a bad man, he is an enemy within our gates, a rogue who will besmirch the character of his own attorney. He is the most selfish individual in society. A sick man? A case for psychopathic clinic? Not at all.

The criminal type, Mr. Swann said, was an elusive thing. In his eight years on the bench of General Sessions and six years in the District Attorney's office he had seen only two men whose criminal instincts stamped themselves unmistakably on their faces. The popular idea of a square jawed, beetlebrowed person with shifty eyes and heavy jowls was not borne out in the daily procession of criminals that passed under the observation of the authorities. Most of the crimes of violence were committed by youths with surprisingly innocent faces, or faces that showed at worst only signs of arrested mentality.

"Lombroso," Mr. Swann said, "thought the instinctive criminal had a distinctive countenance, but neither Shakespeare nor the Police Department bears him out. Shakespeare said: 'There is no art to know the mind's construction from the face.' You can't spell out guilt in a man's countenance.

"There is a saying, 'A guilty conscience is its own accuser,' but a crook has no conscience. He is brazen and audacious.

"The kindly treatment of criminals didn't prevent the crime wave. The present method of coddling the criminal and teaching him that he is more sinned against than sinning certainly didn't have the effect of shielding New York from the present epidemic."

Crime, Mr. Swann said, was rampant all over the world, and you couldn't blame the police or those having to do with the administration of the law for its prevalence in New York.

Mr. Swann pictured the criminal element as well organized, well officered and well directed. In this crisis, he said, we ought to have a well organized citizens' committee to cooperate with the authorities.

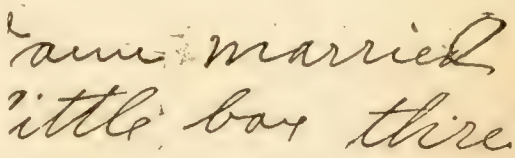
What Handwriting Reveals

CONDUCTED BY LOUISE RICE

The article "What Does Your Handwriting Tell You," which appeared in No. 157, brought us such a flock of inquiries and requests for service on graphology that we have started such a department, conducted by Miss Rice. She is well known for her character delineations based on deductions from specimens of handwriting. We wish to make this a helpful department for our readers. Send us specimens of your handwriting, Miss Rice will analyze them, and the reading will be published in a future number of this magazine. Only a limited number of answers can be published at a time in each issue owing to lack of space. If you desire an early reply and personal letter from Miss Rice, cut out the coupon on page 63 and send it to us, enclosing 10 cents and a stamped envelope to cover the cost of stationery, handling, etc., and Miss Rice will promptly send you a personal reading. The following are answers to a number of our readers who have written to Miss Rice. —THE EDITOR.

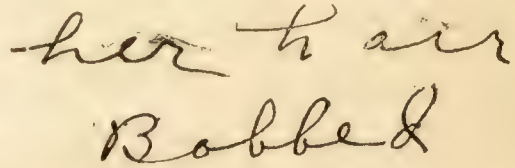
MARY.—Your handwriting is that of a woman probably 35 years of age, of strong prejudices and an inclination to primness. A good housewife and splendid cook, I should say, with an ambition to do something startling that would make the whole world notice you. Your disposition is rather meek and subservient, however. There is a smooth evenness in your character that makes you loved by nearly all who are brought in contact with you. Purity of mind is another of your good qualities, and a tenderness for the afflictions of others that should make you an ideal nurse. You have no taste for business outside of your domestic affairs. If married you would make an ideal mother, for there is great forbearance in your nature and a love for the helpless that is unmistakable. In my judgment the house is your forte, for I am sure you would be a splendid helpmeet for any man.

A. E. D.—Your handwriting is not at all flattering. It always arouses my sympathy when I study such chirography as this, for the one who penned it is an extremely weak creature, the sport of her own moods and



circumstances. You are one who must cultivate resolution and force. You resist opposition too easily. In this specimen there is all the irresolution and spinelessness that one might expect of a person with no courage at all. Develop more force and your enterprises will meet with more success.

ANDREW J.—I am awfully sorry that I cannot write nice answers for every specimen of handwriting I study. The blunt truth often hurts, but it usually does some good. The hand that wrote "Had her hair bobbed" belongs to a soppy no-account chap who should spend his wasted time improving his



character. You are probably a dapper young salesman on the upward grade financially and socially, but your frivolity makes you the laughing-stock of your friends behind your back. If you would stick closer to the

serious side of your character you might make truer friends and business associates. Avoid pretension try to be true to nature.

E. M. T.—I am always pleased to analyze handwriting like yours. It shows such a dominant character that you certainly must be head of your own business. The formation of certain letters show a high-minded and conscientious character, in which a large degree of kindliness, generosity and broadmindedness are shown. You nearly always succeed in your enterprises from sheer force of will, keen perception and a clear comprehension of everything you attack. You must be careful not to become over-confident on account of your earned success, or it will be the wrecking of a splendid mind. You seem to have a few bad habits, of course, and should learn to overcome them. For example, a gay life appeals to you; you lack caution, and you are prone to drink heavily. Your robust health is the least of your considerations, and should be cared for better.

Mary Maru—Answering your question, would say you must be patient until the right man comes along. Don't mind the ridicule of your friends on account of your prim regard for the proprieties. When level-headed, worth-while men marry they are smart enough to select a sensible home-loving girl rather than an addle-pated flapper who smokes cigarettes and tries to act like a man. Your writing is that of a nervous, sensitive person, too self-conscious, too retiring and too easily influenced. Learn self-restraint. Keep in the open air, walk, and do not let people confuse you. I should say you are qualified to do fine embroidery and needlework, painting, and as a cook of dainties you should excell. Your health is too delicate for you to take up anything more laborious.

Benjamin Hosteer—Pretty foxy of you to disguise your handwriting, but that does not phase me a bit. You can't conceal the formation of certain lines in your handwriting, and you forgot to disguise the trend of your mind when writing. That's why I've got you. Here's your character: Secretive, deceptive and silly—not smart, just silly. Rather miserly, too, and overbearing. But I'm bound to admit you are as bright as a button in some things. I infer that you are a big fellow, muscular, affable and good-looking. You would make a good stock or real estate broker, and have it in you to make money, as you certainly are intelligent. You have so many good qualities that I'm surprised at your bad ones. Learn to be more liberal, more candid, more sensible, and people will like you better than they do now.

Star—A person of artistic temperament. You say you would be an actor, but I'm sorry to say you are not fitted for the stage, except in your imagination. You'd make a better mechanic, such as an electrician. As an actor you'd be a dismal failure. Don't "kid" yourself. You haven't got the natural-born talent to shine on the stage. Besides, you are diffident, and that would count against your aspiration. Stick to your trade. Actors are born—not made. Your writing shows a heavy hand—a slow mind. Hard for you to memorize. Your taste is for all that is beautiful in nature. You never would make a leader. You are a plodder. If you study self-reliance, if you learn all the best elements of your business, you will always make a good income. Don't get in a rut. Have independent thoughts. Force yourself ahead and stop being a dreamer. Only practical people succeed.

Charles H. Froster—Glad you like "Mystery Magazine," and would be pleased to give your chirography a reading if you will send me a sample. I cannot analyze typewriting. Your letter was typewritten, you know.

Old Subscriber—Graphology shows me that you are best adapted to inventing things. It also shows me that you are a plain-minded man, in good health, and a very deep thinker. Your power of concentration is enormous for a young fellow. Do not use tobacco. It will undermine your health, as you lead a sedentary life, and, while normal, are not very strong. You can do best with the gift God gave you, so I do not advise a change of vocation.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

101 "A Crimson Price," by Elliott Lester.
102 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by G. Jacobs.
103 "A Museum Mystery," by Jack Bechdolt.
104 "The Little Red Book," by J. Alexander Young.
105 "A Man from Siam," by Chas. F. Oursler.
106 "The Clue of the Emerald Ring," by B. Poynter.
107 "Hell's Hinges," by Hamilton Craigie.
108 "The Wolf," by Katherine Stagg.
109 "The Brass Button," by Jack Bechdolt.
110 "A Whispering Mummy," by Chas. F. Oursler.
111 "Trapping the Jewel Smugglers," by B. Poynter.
112 "The Missing Evidence," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
113 "A Clue by Radio," by Capt. Jack Static.
114 "The District Attorney's Secret," by C. Oursler.
115 "A Man From Headquarters," by H. Craigie.
116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
117 "A Scientific Detective," by D. G. McDonald.
118 "Number Nine Queer Street," by Jack Bechdolt.
119 "Trailed by a Private Detective," by Gottlieb Jacobs.
120 "The Mouse Trap," by Edith Sessions Tupper.
121 "A Radio Mystery," by Capt. Jack Static
122 "The Clawing Death," by Beulah Poynter.
123 "A Master of Millions," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
124 "The Secret of Room 13," by Hamilton Craigie.
125 "Six Months to Live," by George Bronson-Howard.
126 "Seals of Wax," by Jack Bechdolt.
127 "When Crooks Conspire," by Harold F. Podhaskl.
128 "The Mystery of the Blue Car," by H. Craigie.
129 "The Detective and the Law," by Frederick F. Shuey.
130 "The Hand in the Dark," by Chas. F. Oursler.
131 "The Trail of a Rogue," by George Bronson-Howard.
132 "The Woman from Nowhere," by Jack Bechdolt
133 "The Time Detective," by Frank Blighton.
134 "The Whispering-Room," by Frederick C. Davis.
135 "One Clue Missing," by Chas. F. Oursler.
136 "The Doom of the Damned," by Joe Burke.
137 "The Consuming Death," by Gilbert Hammond.
138 "Mrs. Deane's Jewels," by Beatrice S. Luisi.
139 "The Brass Voice," by Jack Bechdolt.
140 "For Shame," by Wm. Hamilton Osborne.
141 "The Triple Cross," by Hamilton Craigie.
142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
146 "The Argentine Ruby," by Beulah and Shirley Poynter.
147 "The Barrington Arms Case," by Jack Bechdolt.
148 "Hounded," by Frank Blighton.
149 "Direct Action," by Dr. Harry Enton.
150 "The Footprints On the Ceiling," by Chas. Fulton Oursler.
151 "The One Chance," by Thomas Ripley.
152 "Weapons of Hate," by Eric Howard.
153 "In Reserve," by Frank Blighton.
154 "The House on the Rocks," by Jack Bechdolt.

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free.

The price of the following numbers is 15 cents:

155 "Laughing Death's Trail," by Nels Leroy Jorgensen.
156 "The Medicine Dropper," by G. P. Wilson.
157 "A Question of Kick," by Eugene Jones.
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By Walter S. Dean

Alas! that spring should vanish with the rose!
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—OMAR KHAYYAM.

A SECRET vital to human happiness has been discovered. An answer to an ancient problem which, sooner or later, affects the welfare of virtually every man and woman. As this problem undoubtedly will come to you eventually, if it has not come already, I urge you to read this article carefully. It may give you information of a value beyond all price.

This newly-revealed secret is not a new "philosophy" nor a financial formula. It is not a political panacea. It has to do with something of far greater moment to the individual—human happiness, especially in the later years of life. And there is nothing theoretical, imaginative or fantastic about it, because it comes from the coldly exact realms of the practical where values must be proved. It "works." And because it does work—most delightfully—it is one of the most important discoveries made in years. Thousands already bless it for having rescued them from disappointment and misery. Millions will rejoice because of it in years to come.

The peculiar value of this discovery is in its virtue for lifting the physical handicaps resulting from the premature waning of the vital forces of life, whether due to overwork, over-worry, sickness or the general over-expenditure of nervous energy in the strenuous living typical of the modern day. True happiness does not depend on wealth, position or fame. Primarily, it is a matter of health. Not the inefficient, "half-alive" condition which ordinarily passes as "health," but the abundant, vibrant, magnetic vitality of superb manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, this kind of health is rare. Our civilization, with its wear and tear, rapidly depletes

recuperative capacity, and, in a physical sense, old age comes on when life should be at its prime.

But this is not a tragedy of our era alone. Ages ago a Persian poet, in the world's most melodious epic of pessimism, voiced humanity's immemorial complaint that "spring should vanish with the rose" and the song of summer too soon come to an end. And for centuries before Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal verse, science had searched—and in the centuries that have passed since then has continued to search, without halt, for the fabled "fountain of youth"—the means for renewing energy and extending the summer time of life.

Now, after many years of research, joyful reports from thousands show that lives clouded by the haze of too early autumn have been illumined by the summer sun of health and joy; old age, in a sense being kept at bay, and the physical and mental vigor of former years again enjoyed in work and recreation. And the discovery which so adds to the joy of living is easily available to every one who feels the need of greater energy and vitality.

The discovery had its origin in famous European laboratories. Brought to America, it was developed into a product that has won the highest praise in thousands of cases, many of which had defied all other treatments. In scientific circles the discovery has been known and used for several years with extraordinary gratifying appreciation for the success it has demonstrated. It is now put up in convenient tablet form, under the name of Korex compound, for distribution to the general public.

Anyone who finds life losing its charm and color or the feebleness of old age coming on years too soon, can obtain full strength treatment of this compound, sufficient for ordinary cases, under a positive guarantee that it costs nothing if it fails to prove satisfactory and only $2 if satisfied. In average cases, the compound usually brings about gratifying improvement in a few days.

Simply write in confidence to the Melton Laboratories, 2178 Melton Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., and this wonder restorative will be mailed to you, sealed in a plain wrapper. You may enclose $2 or, if you prefer, just send your name without money and pay the postman $2 and postage when the parcel is delivered. In either case, if you report within ten days that you are not satisfied, the purchase price will be refunded on request. The Melton Laboratories are nationally known and thoroughly reliable. Moreover, their offer is fully guaranteed so no one need hesitate to accept it. If you need this widely praised and remarkable rejuvenator, write for it today.

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